5186 Theology 4 to 39. -1-

A COMPENDIOUS

VIEW

OF THE

Grounds of *Religion*,

BOTH

NATURAL and REVEAL'D:

IN

TWO DISSERTATIONS.

I. Shewing, That *Natural Religion*, and the *Chriſtian Revelation*, with reſpect to the Teſtimony born to it by *Miracles*, ſtand both of 'em upon *one* and the *ſame* Foundation; and that *Natural* Religion has not whereon to ſupport it ſelf, if *Chriſtianity* is ill grounded.

II. Upon the *Jews*, at the Time our Saviour acted publickly as the Meſſenger of God, with reſpect to their *Credulity* or *Wariness* in Believing.

ROM. i. 22. Φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ ἐμωράνθησαν.

25. Οἵτινες μετήλλαξαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐν τῷ ψεύδει.

By *THOMAS SEATON*, M. A.
Vicar of *Raunſton*, and Chaplain to the Earl of *Nottingham*.

LONDON:

Printed for J. and J. KNAPTON, at the *Crown* in St. *Paul's* Church-yard; J. ROBERTS, near the *Oxford-Arms* in *Warwick-Lane*; and T. WOTTON, at the *Three-Daggers* againſt St. *Dunſtan's* Church, *Fleetſtreet*. MDCCXXIX.

TWO DISSERTATIONS

IN

VOL. IV.

PREFACE.

ALL Natural Religion *being derived from the Reports made by our* Senſes, *and our* Reaſonings *upon theſe* Reports: *The Firſt Queſtion moſt pertinently ariſing upon the Subject of* Natural Religion, *is, Whether the* Reports *of the* Senſes, *and the* Reflections *of the* Mind *upon them, (if the* Mind *and* Senſes *are both* carefully *and* warily *employ'd) may be ſo juſt, as to become a proper ground of* Certainty; *and this as the true Baſis of Natural Religion is the Subject Matter of the Firſt Diſſertation.*

But then ſuppoſing the Senſes *and* Judgment *of Man capable of yeilding him* Certainty *when* carefully *exercis'd; yet ſince the* Miracles *teſtifying to the Truth of* Chriſtianity *were wrought many hundred Years ago, and upon the Stage of* Judæa; *the next Queſtion naturally ariſing with reſpect to the* Goſpel Revelation *as laying a claim to* Miracles *is, Whether the Dwellers in* Judæa, *the Scene of theſe* Miracles, *did ſo* carefully *employ their* Senſes *and* Reaſon *upon them, that* we *our ſelves cou'd not have employ'd them* more carefully *than* they.

Becauſe

Becauſe otherwiſe it is not reaſonable for me to conclude my *Aſſent to* Miracles *from the Obſervations of* others, *if their Obſervations were* ſlight, careleſs, *and* ſuperficial; *This therefore is the Subject of the* Second Diſſertation.

By proceeding thus, we ſhall feel the Ground under us to be firm all along as we tread.

Becauſe if, Firſt, the Senſes *and* Mind *of Man when* warily *employ'd, are ſufficient Ground of Human* Certainty; *and if, Secondly, the* Senſes *and* Mind *of Man were thus* warily *employ'd with reference to the Goſpel* Miracles, *then were the Goſpel* Miracles *ſomewhat, which we are ſure were wrought; becauſe Mens* Senſes *and* Reaſon *when* warily *exercis'd did witneſs to the working of them, and when* ſo *exercis'd are prov'd the proper Ground of* Certainty.

The Firſt Diſſertation *here will I hope give Satisfaction as to the* Former, *and the* Second *as to the* Latter, *and both together ſettle the* Truth *and* Certainty *of* Natural Religion *on* one *hand, and of the* Goſpel Revelation *on the* other; *ſo far as* Miracles *wrought in favour of it can plead in its behalf.*

DIS-

DISSERTATION I.

Shewing that Natural Religion, and the Chriſtian Revelation, ſtand both of 'em upon one and the ſame Foundation; and that Natural Religion has not whereon to ſupport it ſelf, if Chriſtianity is ill grounded.

Introduction.

THERE is nothing perhaps matter of greater Wonder with the truly conſiderate, than the vaſt Lengths which divers of the Youth of Birth and Fortune are running towards a ſtupid *Atheiſm:* Their Leaders all the while diſclaiming any Intentions of this Kind, pretending not to aim at ſetting 'em at Liberty from all Obligations to *Religion* in general, but only to expoſe the Weakneſs of the *Chriſtian* Revelation.

§. 1. *Natural and Reveal'd Religion ſtand on the ſame Foundation.*

§. 1. It were a Labour then not at all unbecoming us, to ſearch the Foundation whereon the goodly Edifice of *Religion*, both of *Natural* and *Reveal'd*, ſtands, and ſee whether they don't in Truth reſt upon the ſame Sup-

port; becauſe if they are found ſo to do, then in the demoliſhing the *Goſpel Revelation*, Men deſtroy at the ſame Time the very Principle upon which *Natural Religion* is built, and *both* of 'em are involv'd in one and the ſame Ruin.

The Fortunes of each of theſe being found thus linked, that they muſt ſink or ſwim together, if *Natural* Religion is upheld, *Reveal'd* muſt needs ſtand very ſecure: And they both of 'em I truſt in the following Papers, will evidently appear to have ſo much Certainty, that a Man muſt be either very *Knaviſh* or *Weak*, in point of Reaſoning, who pretends to diſpute their Evidence.

To draw this into as narrow a Compaſs as may be, I ſhall obſerve, that there is only a Conceſſion or two to be made us, and thoſe the moſt reaſonable in the World. And,

§. 2. *The Conceſſion requir'd to be made, is, that there is not a Lye in our whole Compoſition.*

§. 2. Firſt of all, we require it to be granted us, that there is not a *Lye* in our *whole Compoſition*; that the Author of our Being has not faſhion'd us after ſuch an unfortunate Sort, that our *Senſes* and *Judgment* deceive us in every manner of Thing about which they are exercis'd.

§. 3. *The Writer againſt Chriſtianity muſt needs make the Conceſſion, for the Reputation of his own Reaſoning.*

§. 3. We have no need to thank the Writers againſt the *Chriſtian Faith* for allowing us this: Becauſe if neither the Mind can ſerve us to draw juſt Concluſions, nor the Senſes to report Things aright, then is the *Atheiſt* himſelf upon no Certainty, either in his *Obſervations* or *Arguments*; as being not of a more advantageous Make than the *Chriſtian*, or *any* other Man.

For

For if Man can neither *ſee* nor *argue* with *Certainty*, becauſe there is a *Lye* and *Falſhood* in his Senſes and his Judgment, then the Infidel, being a *Man* form'd with the ſame kind of *Lying Senſes*, and *Erring Mind*, can no more pretend to a Certainty of Truth in his Arguments *againſt* Chriſtianity, than we can in ours *for* it: And conſequently, his averring there to be ſuch a *Lye* in the whole *human* Frame, that the *Senſes* can never report Things aright, nor the *Underſtanding* form any certain Concluſions from 'em, ſaps all the Credit of his *own* Arguments, and the *Foundation* which ſhould ſupport 'em, and proclaims his *Obſervations* of Things, and *Reaſonings* from 'em, to be all of 'em either *certain Falſities*, or *uncertain Truths*.

We are not beholden then to the Enemies of the *Chriſtian* Faith for granting us, that there is not a *Lye* in our whole *Compoſition*; but were it to be diſputed with us, we cou'd eaſily maintain that there is not, and prove that it muſt needs be true, that God has not faſhion'd us with a *Falſhood* in all our Make. For ſee a little the prodigious Nonſenſe for any Man to ſay he has.

§. 4. For if he has, then my *Underſtanding* lyes to me, when it tells me, that the Whole is greater than a Part; that every Effect muſt have ſome Cauſe; that Two and Two make Four.

§. 4. *The groſs Abſurdities of denying the Conceſſion above.*

If he alſo has, then may all my *Senſes* be *Lyars*, as well as my *Underſtanding*; and my Sight may err, when it tells me, that there is ſuch a bright Being in Nature as the *Sun*; and my Feeling, when it reports to me, that this *Sun*

has a Power to cauſe that Senſation in me which I call Heat. And a Man that ſhall have the Aſſurance to tell me, I am entirely under a Miſtake; that the whole is not greater than a Part, that there is no ſuch Creature in Nature as the Sun, and to fancy either of theſe is a Dream; I can't think to be a Perſon proper to be talk'd with; as knowing it wou'd be in vain to pretend to convince a Man with *Reaſons*, that ſhou'd be impudent enough to deny *ſelf*-evident Truths; and ſuch an one muſt be either too much a *Fool* to be argu'd with, or too much a *Droll* to have any Thing ſerious ſaid to him.

§. 5. *Such a Denial, a denying ſelf-evident Truths.*

§. 5. Even what we call *ſelf*-evident Truths, may, as to ſeveral of 'em, in ſome Senſe be called only Truths upon Suppoſition: That is, certainly true, if our *Underſtanding* and *Senſes* are rightly form'd. And we are ſo ſure they are, that I can't be ſurer that I my ſelf am *ſomewhat*, than I am, that the Whole is greater than a Part, and that there is ſuch a Being as the Sun.

§. 6. *Which it is vain or needleſs to prove.*

§. 6. All ſuch therefore as may be truly rang'd under the Notion of ſelf-evident Truths, it is either *vain*, or elſe it is *needleſs* to pretend to prove. It is *vain* to pretend to prove 'em, if themſelves carry ſo ſtrong an Evidence, that it is not poſſible to find a *Medium* to prove 'em by, that carries a ſtronger. And it is *needleſs* to prove 'em, if the Body of Mankind are ſo thoroughly convinc'd of their *Certainty*, that they wou'd inſtantly cry out with Indignation againſt any Man that ſhou'd pretend to queſtion

queſtion 'em, as offering thereby an Affront to the common Senſe of all Mankind.

I believe then, that no body will diſpute it with me, that our Underſtanding and Senſes are ſo juſtly form'd, that we may ordinarily depend upon 'em with Safety, when they are carefully us'd: And unleſs thus much is granted us, we have no Foundation for *Natural* Religion it ſelf.

§. 7. For what elſe is all that we call *Natural* Religion, as to the *Theory* of it, but the diſcerning the *Inviſible Things of God from the Creation of the World; and from the Things which are made the tracing out his eternal Power and Godhead?* Rom. i. 20. And what as to the *Practice* of it, but a *ſuitably glorifying God, after thus knowing him, a continuing no longer unthankful, a ceaſing for the future to be vain in our Imaginations*, a forbearing hereafter to *change the Truth of God into a Lye* by *Idolatry*, by *moral Pollutions*, by *unnatural Defilements*, &c. Leſt God, as a Judgment upon us, for *not liking to retain him in our Knowledge*, ſhould give us up to a reprobate Mind, and the doing every Thing which is not convenient?

§. 7. *A ſhort Scheme of Natural Religion, as to its Theory and Practice.*

Rom. i. 2, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27.

This is in ſhort the Notion of *Natural* Religion: And upon what in Reality does it all reſt as its proper Baſis? Even upon the *Truth* of our Compoſition, that the Reports which our *Senſes* make, may be rely'd upon; and that the *Mind* is capable of drawing ſure and infallible Concluſions from 'em.

§. 8. *How this depends upon the Truth of our Frame and Compoſition.*

§. 8. Thus for Inſtance, when I look up towards Heaven, my *Eyes* (if the Reports of 'em are to be credited,) bring me Notice thence, that there is a vaſt luminous Body in the Neighbourhood of the Earth where I live, that enlightens it, and with its Warmth gives ſuch Life and Fruitfulneſs to it, as to qualify it to ſuſtain all the numberleſs Inhabitants it carries upon its Surface.

When I moreover diſcern the *Moon* to be ſo ſituated, as in a great Meaſure to ſupply his Abſence in the Night: When I alſo diſcern the Firmament bedeck'd with Stars, not to be counted for Number, and reaching farther into the vaſt Expanſe than my Eye can carry me, then do I naturally begin to exerciſe my *Reaſon* upon theſe amazing Appearances. And this *Reaſon*, (if it is not faſhion'd with an untoward Diſability to raiſe any other Concluſions, than what are always falſe) arguing from an Effect to ſome Cauſe, tells me, that *He who built all Things is God*, no leſs ſurely, than that *every Houſe was made by ſome Man*, who was the Builder.

Heb. iii. 4.

Becauſe if a *Minute Effect* muſt have ſome *Cauſe*, though *Minute* in the ſame Proportion, then muſt an *Immenſe Production* have an *Immenſe Author* that produc'd it.

And if there is not an Error in this ſeemingly ingenuous way of Reaſoning, but my *Senſe* and *Mind* does each do its Office aright, I am ſure that the *Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament ſheweth his handy-work. That one Day telleth another,*

Pſal. xix. 1.

another, and that one Night certifieth another; that there is no Speech or Language, but the Voices of theſe are heard amongſt 'em.

No People are there ſo remote, ſo rude or barbarous, but theſe *vaſt Effects* do every Day proclaim, as with a Trumpet, that the *Cauſe* producing 'em muſt be *vaſt* alſo; they tell moreover, that he who diſpoſed all Things with ſo much *Wiſdom*, muſt be himſelf ſuperlatively *Wiſe*; they tell that his ranging 'em in ſuch Sort, as for us to partake of the Benefits of 'em, proclaims him no leſs *Good* and *Beneficent* to Mankind, than he is *Wiſe* and *Great*, and that he is therefore the Object of our *Love* and *Thankfulneſs*, as well as of our *Wonder* and *Adoration*.

Here we have in ſhort the Scheme of all *Natural* Religion; and plainly ſee that a *Truth* in the Frame of our *Mind* and *Senſes*, is antecedently requiſite whereon to ground our Knowledge of all the Attributes and Perfections of the *Deity*, and the Obligations we are under to *Love* and Worſhip him.

But if my Faculty of *Seeing*, however carefully I exerciſe it, is yet an errant Deceiver, and nothing is ever there, when it ſtill tells me there is ſomewhat; if when it gives me Notice that an Houſe or Tree, a Church or Horſe are very near me, there are no ſuch Things in the World; and that they are all as very a Falſhood, as are thoſe *Chimæras*, the uncouth Creatures of my Fancy, when I dream; then indeed all the Frame of *Natural* Religion ſinks at once.

For if, for Inſtance, all thoſe heavenly Bodies, the *Sun*, the *Moon*, and *Stars*, which I verily, in confidence of the Fidelity of my *Senſes*, took

to be ſomewhat, are *not* at all; all the Concluſions I drew from their *Greatneſs*, their *Benefit* and *Luſtre*, to the Honour of the *Creator*, fail, as flowing all from ſuch *Premiſes* as are not: For if they *are* not, they cannot be *Effects*, and therefore cannot reflect any Honour to any one as their *Cauſe*.

§. 9. *The Argument transferr'd to the Goſpel Revelation.*

§. 9. Let us now alter the Scene a little, and change it from that of *Natural* Religion, to the *Goſpel* Revelation.

The admitting this Revelation as a Rule of *Faith* and *Manners*, is grounded upon the firm Perſuaſion, that *Jeſus*, the Perſon who was the *Author* of this *Revelation*, was truly ſent from *Heaven* upon this Errand, and was commiſſion'd to deliver his Meſſage from the great *Author* of *Nature*. And this is the Reaſon why we ſubmit to ſeveral Precepts, as deliver'd in the Goſpel, which the Law of *Nature* or *Reaſon* is altogether ſilent in.

Thus for Inſtance, it is no Dictate of the *Law* of *Nature*, that I ſhould be *baptiz'd*, *receive the Lord's Supper*, nor yet perhaps that I ſhou'd *bleſs them that curſe, or pray for ſuch as deſpitefully uſe and perſecute me*. But inaſmuch as I am firmly perſuaded, that he who bid me do thus, was commiſſion'd by *God* to inſtruct me ſo, I receive the Inſtruction, as the Rule of my *Manners* and *Behaviour*.

Matth. xxviii. 19.
Matth. xxvi. 26, 27.
Luke vi. 28.

§. 10. *How this reſts altogether upon the Certainty, that there is no Lye in the human Compoſition.*

§. 10. But why believe I the *Author* of *Nature* ſent him? Even becauſe he was empower'd to alter the ſtated Rules and Courſes

Courſes of Nature, in Confirmation of his Meſſage. But how know I this? Becauſe he rais'd the *Dead*, baniſh'd Sickneſſes in an *Inſtant* from human Bodies, made the *Blind* to *ſee*, the *Deaf* to *hear*, the *Dumb* to *ſpeak*. But how is all this certain? Becauſe I depend upon the *Truth* and *Veracity* of the *human Frame* and *Compoſition*, that there is not a *Lye* throughout the *whole*: That Men can as certainly diſtinguiſh a *dead* Corpſe from a *Living* Perſon, as they can diſtinguiſh an *Horſe* from a *Tree*; that they can tell when there is a violent *Tempeſt* and *Storm*, and when there is a *Calm*; that they can tell when a Man *walks*, whom for *many* Years paſt, they have known to have been ſo thorough a *Cripple*, that he was not able to ſtir.

Matth. xi. 5. Mark vii. 37.

And therefore if *all* the Apoſtles, if *Five hundred Brethren*, that had been *long* intimately acquainted with *Jeſus*, and freely convers'd with him, cou'd not *know* him when they *ſaw* him alive again after his *Paſſion*, though one had the Curioſity, in the Preſence of many of 'em, to thruſt his Finger into *the very Print of the Nails wherewith he was faſten'd to the Croſs, and into the Orifice* which the Spear had made:

1 Cor. xvi. 6, 7. John xx. 25, 27.

If the vaſt Multitudes that knew of *Lazarus*'s being *truly* dead, and rais'd to Life again, cou'd be deceiv'd: If the Parents of him that had been blind from his Birth, did not know their *own* Son, and cou'd not be certain that he had ever been Blind, and cou'd afterwards ſee: If the Widow of *Nain* cou'd

John xi. 39. John ix. 18.

Luke vii. 21.

be

be miſtaken in her Son, that was carry'd out to be buried, and all thoſe Friends of hers, which muſt doubtleſs have ſeen the Corpſe, before they wou'd venture to carry it out, in order to its Burial, were every one miſtaken, and cou'd not diſtinguiſh a *breathleſs* Trunk from a *living* Body: If the numberleſs People that had their Children or Servants reſtor'd to *Health* from deſperate *Sickneſſes*, their Limbs to *Soundneſs* and *Strength*, which were *weak* and *ſhrivel'd*: If all theſe numberleſs People were miſtaken, and they thought they ſaw *dead* Corpſes, Perſons *blind*, and *lame*, and *ſick*, when there were *truly* no ſuch Objects; then is there a *Perverſeneſs* and *Obliquity* in this *Compoſition* of ours: And then indeed we cannot depend upon any *Miracles* ever having been wrought; and we cannot be ſure of the Author of *Nature's* having born any Teſtimony to the *Goſpel* Revelation.

For if all the Works we took to have been *miraculous*, were nothing ſo; if when Nature ſeem'd to have alter'd its Courſe at Jeſus's Command, it was all a Deluſion, then our Reaſoning to the Truth of Jeſus's being the Author of *Nature*'s Meſſenger, and that he was *a Prophet mighty in deed*, is a Reaſoning altogether groundleſs, as being deduc'd from Premiſes which were falſe, or at leaſt uncertain; upon Miracles having been wrought by him, whereas we cou'd not be certain there were *any* ſuch, as being never certain our *Senſes* are juſt in the Relations they make to us, but are everlaſtingly deceiving us with *Falſhoods*, even when we uſe them with the utmoſt *Care* and *Circumſpection*: And then indeed the whole Building of the *Goſpel* Revelation as to the Claim

it lays to a Divine Authority from Miracles falls, but it involves in its ruin that of *Natural* Religion too.

But if Men cou'd rightly *hear*, and *ſee*, and *feel*, and *underſtand*; if their *Senſes* cou'd be truſted to; then were there *certainly* a *vaſt* Number of *Miracles* wrought in favour of the *Goſpel* Revelation, and Jeſus was the God of *Nature's* Meſſenger.

§. 11. Here indeed there is a *Conceſſion*, which we muſt ask to have allow'd us, (much of the ſame Nature with that which we requir'd in behalf of Natural Religion, and full as reaſonable) and this is, that *Human Nature* was as perfect in the Years of our Lord, 30, 1, 2, 3. as it is now in 1727-8-9. That a Number of *wiſe*, and *wary*, and *rational* Men, cou'd tell as well *then* when they ſaw a *dead* Corpſe, a *blind* or *lame* Man, and when they were reſtor'd to *Life*, to *Sight* and *Soundneſs*, as we can now.

§. 11. *The Conceſſion requir'd to be made in behalf of the Goſpel Miracles.*

§. 12. For if we allow not thus much, we muſt in effect ſay, that the Years of our Lord, 30, 1, 2, 3. were Years peculiarly unfortunate, eſpecially to the People in *Judæa*; that *every* where and at *all* times Men cou'd diſtinguiſh a *living* Perſon from a *dead* one, a *ſeeing* from a *blind* one, a *ſound* one from a *Cripple*; cou'd tell when they heard Articulate Voices and Sentences ſpoke, and when the Sound was only the whiſtling of a Wind, or the roaring of a Tempeſt: But in the unfortunate Years above, Men dwelling in *Judæa* cou'd do nothing of all this. Which is

§. 12. *The groſs Abſurdity of not allowing it.*

an

an Aſſertion ſo prodigiouſly abſurd and ridiculous, that the Conceſſion required above will be readily granted without any Scruple; or the Credit of them who ſhall deny it, will all of it ſink and periſh with the Denial.

§. 13. *Circumſtances aſcertaining the Truth of the Goſpel Miracles.*

§. 13. Were indeed the Miracles of the Goſpel *very few*, and thoſe wrought in much *obſcurity*; were they *one* or *two* only, and thoſe before a *ſlender* Company of Beholders, there might be room for Suſpicions of *Juggle* and *Impoſture*, on the part of the *Workers*, or of *Miſtake* in that of the *Beholders*. But when they were *vaſtly* Numerous, and too many for an Hiſtorian to recount that purpos'd to write in *ſhort*; when they were *open* and *publick* before great Multitudes; when the Effects wrought were *viſible* and *laſting*; when they extorted a Confeſſion of their being Works miraculous from *Enemies* as well as *Friends*, ſufficient to controul the Obloquy of ſuch as were the moſt peeviſhly and perverſely diſpoſed to cavil at Jeſus and fall out with him.

John xxi. 25.

John xi. 42.

Act. iv. 16.

When there were all theſe concurrent and unexceptionable Circumſtances to aſcertain their Truth, it muſt either be ſaid that Mens *Senſe* and *Reaſon* cannot ſerve them to judge of Works Miraculous; that the Senſes are never to be depended upon as *Judges*, not even in the very Objects which it is their proper buſineſs to judge of; or elſe it muſt be own'd, that the Goſpel has had the Atteſtation of works *miraculous*.

§. 14. But if a Man cannot know when he ſees a *dead* Corpſe, a *blind* or *lame* Man, or the like; if he can't be ſure when he beholds that Corpſe rais'd again to *Life*, to *walk*, *eat*, *drink*, *converſe*; if not ſure when the *Blind* has his *Sight* reſtor'd and the *Lame* his *Feet*; if he can't be ſure that his Reaſon does then draw juſt Concluſions from all this, when it tells him that numberleſs Inſtances of a Perſon's thus controuling *Nature* as he pleas'd (in ſupport of a rational Doctrine) is a Demonſtration that the God of *Nature* ſent him:

§. 14. *If the Beholders of them were miſtaken, we may be miſtaken in every thing now.*

Then may he as well be deceiv'd, when he thinks he *ſees* the *Sun* or feels his *warmth*, when he ſees Fruits and Herbs grow by the help of this Heat; and his Reaſon may be deceiv'd alſo, when it concludes, that every *vaſt Effect* muſt have a *proportionate* Cauſe; that a Work *wiſely* fram'd muſt have had ſome wiſe Artificer; the Grounds of Certainty being the ſame in both Caſes, and not at all fuller in the *one* than the *other*.

And I dare ſay that any Man whatſoever wou'd undertake to aver, that he cou'd be as ſure when he ſaw his Father *alive* and ſaw him *dead*, as he cou'd diſtinguiſh *Day* from *Night*; that if his Child was reſtor'd to *Sight* from being born *Blind*, he cou'd be as ſure of ſuch an *Effect* being produc'd, as he cou'd be, when he ſaw a *Tree* with *Leaves* and a Tree without, when the Caſement of his Window ſtood *open* and when it was *ſhut*.

§. 15. For ſince the Subject Matter on which Jeſus exercis'd his Power of Miracles were all throughout *ſenſible* Objects, ſuch

§. 15. *The abſolute Certainty that they were not.*

as

as the *Eyes* cou'd *ſee*, the *Ears hear*, and the *Hands handle*, they were capable of yielding the Spectators as abſolute a *Certainty*, as a Man is capable of deriving from the ſimple Ideas ariſing from his *Senſes* now; and this muſt amount to an *abſolute* Certainty, if all things notify'd to us by the *Senſes* are not Falſhood, Deluſion, and Dream; if we can be aſſur'd by them that there is *any* thing in Nature, and that they can diſtinguiſh one thing from another.

§. 16. *The Attempts to invalidate the Goſpel tend to downright* Atheiſm,

§. 16. The Attempts then which are abroad to prove the Goſpel to have had *no* Miracles to ſupport it, have a moſt direct Tendency in the End to root out all Natural Religion. The Argument indeed is begun at *Revealed*, but it reaches even to the aboliſhing the Notion of a *God* and *Providence*, and cannot with any conſiſtency ſtop ſhort of it; no, nor yet till the unwary Youth of the Kingdom are diſputed out of their very Senſes.

§. 17. *The Proſelytes to Infidelity are imperceptibly brought by their Leaders to renounce the belief of their own Senſes.*

§. 17. This the Patrons of Infidelity have in effect already done; they have already perſuaded Multitudes to believe that in the Years 31-2-3, Men cou'd not *ſee*, and *hear*, and *reaſon*, and *feel*, with any manner of *Certainty*; cou'd not tell a *living* Perſon from a *dead* one. And inaſmuch as it is the erranteſt Nonſenſe in the World, to think that Human Nature is become perfecter *now* in the Years 1727-8-9, than it was at that time; they have by bringing them thus far, brought them to own, that themſelves can *ſee*, and *hear*, and *feel*, and *reaſon* with *no* degree of *Certainty* at all.

This

This is in truth to make them own, that they can't certainly challenge any material Object to be near them, tho' they have *bruis'd* their Hands and broke their *Shins* againſt it; that the Door appearing to them to be *open*, may poſſibly not be ſo, though in Confidence of their Eyes not deceiving 'em, they paſs through it into another Room eaſily, and unhurt; which they could not have done, if it were *ſhut*.

All this, I ſay, they have already brought 'em to own by *neceſſary* Conſequence, and the ignorant and unwary know it not; becauſe theſe ſhocking Propoſitions are not *crudely* offer'd to the Mind, but are cover'd over and diſguis'd; and the Conſequences, though *natural* and *indubitable*, being ſomewhat *remote*, are not by theſe giddy and ſuperficial Reaſoners attended to.

§. 18. *The Argument contain'd in the foregoing Pages ſumm'd up in ſhort.*

§. 18. Either therefore, in ſhort, Mens Senſes may be depended upon as faithful Relators of Things, when *duly* and *warily* exercis'd, or they may not; if they may, then are we ſure of Works miraculous having been wrought in favour of the Goſpel Revelation, and conſequently of *Reveal'd* Religion being well grounded: If they *may not*, then is there *nothing* whereon to build *Natural* Religion; we are not ſure of *any* thing at all exiſting without us; and if not ſure of their *Exiſtence*, we cannot be ſure of any *beauties*, or *wiſdom*, or *harmony* in their *frame* and *make*; and cannot therefore infer certainly any *Creator*, from things which are *not* themſelves with *any* Certainty, and therefore not certainly *Creatures*; nor yet can we by any indubitable Conſequence conclude him *wiſe* from the *wiſe* diſpoſal of thoſe Works, if the very *Being*

of

of the Works themſelves is ſubjected to *doubt*; nor finally, that he is without all peradventure, *kind* to us in creating things for our *Comfort* and *Support*, and exacts on that account, our *Love*, our *Service* and *Adoration*, if we cannot be certain of there being *any* thing *Created*.

For we muſt firſt be ſure that there is ſomewhat *Created*, before we can know there to be any *Creator*; we muſt be ſure thoſe *Creatures* are form'd with *Wiſdom*, before we admire and adore that *Creator* as *wiſe*; and we muſt be ſure that thoſe Creatures are form'd with a Subſerviency to *our Welfare*, before we can love and ſerve this wiſe Creator, as *kind* and *beneficent* to us. But we can be ſure of *nothing* of all this, if there is an *Error* and *Uncertainty* in the *firſt* Conveyances of all Knowledge; for there is no ſure reaſoning with reſpect to any *Cauſe*, where we can't be ſure of any *Effect*.

The Argument therefore in ſhort reſts upon this Dilemma, That they *will* either allow there to be a Truth in the Frame of Mankind, and yield that his Senſes are not perpetual Lyars; or they *will not*. If they *will* allow and yield this, then *Revealed* Religion has a good Support; and if they *will not*, then *Natural* has no Support at all.

It may ſeem indeed of no great Conſequence to *Mankind*, whether they admit Jeſus to have been God's *Meſſenger* or no. But the *Grounds* whereon we admit him to be *ſuch* an one, being the *ſame* whereon we own a *God* and *Providence*; in denying the *one* we conſequently deny the *other*: and the Tranſition from disbelieving *Jeſus* to have been *God's Meſſenger*, to the Disbelief of *God's Being*, is *eaſy* and *natural*, is *certain* and *indubitable*.

A Diſſerta-

A Diſſertation upon the Jews *at the Time our Saviour acted publickly as the Meſſenger of God, with reſpect to their Credulity or Warineſs in Believing.*

§. 1. ONE amongſt the *ſeveral* Cauſes which have largely contributed to the Infidelity of the preſent Times, is an Opinion generally entertain'd, that this is the only *inquiſitive* and *curious* Age; that Men in former Times were *raſh* Believers, temerariouſly yielding their Aſſent, without *ſufficiently* weighing of Things; and that if there had been the *ſame* notable Spirit, the ſame Learning and Caution abroad there is *now* in *England*, Men wou'd never have given in to ſeveral Articles of Belief, which now are eſteem'd as certain Truths.

§. 1. *One Cauſe of the preſent Infidelity, an Opinion that in the Goſpel-Age Men were not wary and inquiſitive as now.*

§. 2. If then it can be made appear, that at the *Time* and on the *Place* where our Saviour acted, and which was the Stage of all his *Miniſtry*, the Scene of all his *Life* and *Actions*, there was reigning all the while amongſt thoſe he had to do with, the greateſt Spirit of *diffidence* and *ſhyneſs* to believe, that was ever known; and that no Age could exceed, if any could ever match it for prodigious

§. 2. *The Deſign of this Diſſertation to prove that Opinion falſe.*

Caution and *Diſtruſt*; then we may reſt aſſur'd, that the Diſciples which were made to the Religion of Jeſus, were in a manner forc'd into it by the pure dint of *Truth*; and that it was not till after a *ſtrict* Examination of the Works pretending to be miraculous, that they believed him a real Worker of Miracles; nor till after a *nice* Obſervation of his Life and Doctrine, that they admitted of him as a Teacher ſent from God.

Hence will ariſe *this* indubitable Conſequence; that if the Men of that Time, after all their *Warineſs* and *ſtrict* Examination of our Saviour's *Acts* and *Miracles*, were notwithſtanding deceived, there muſt then be an *Original* Defect in the human Frame; and that Men can never depend upon any Reports of their *Senſes*, however *warily* exercis'd and employ'd.

But the Conſequence, I truſt, of the following Papers will be, that Men will ſo plainly ſee the *extreme* Caution, which that Generation our Saviour convers'd amongſt, did uſe in penetrating into the Truth of all things, that every Man muſt own, that he himſelf cou'd not have conducted his Aſſent with *any* Wariness, which could poſſibly have been *greater* than theirs; and that conſequently, there is no more doubt of Works *miraculous* having been wrought by Jeſus, and other ſignificant Teſtimonies born to him, as a Prophet ſent from God; than if *himſelf* had been an Eye and Ear-witneſs of all that happen'd, and was then tranſacted by him when on Earth.

§. 3. Had Jeſus made his Appearance in the World with *Pomp* and *Grandeur*, and come amongſt the *Jews* cloath'd with a great deal of earthly Glory and Power; this would have ſo dazzl'd their Eyes, and wou'd have ſo charm'd and bewitch'd them, that they wou'd perhaps much more ſlightly have examin'd his Pretenſions to be their Meſſiah or a Meſſenger from God.

§. 3. *A Reaſon why the* Jews *wou'd be more than ordinary ſcrupulous in examining Chriſt's Miracles.*

But coming with all the Circumſtances of *Meanneſs*, this was ſuch a *vaſt* ſurprize and baulk to all their Expectations of a Perſon aſſuming that Character, that they were diſpoſed to doubt of all things: And his *Miracles* being *chiefly* they wherewith he was to force his way to their Belief, they were moſt *diligently* ſifted and try'd; and had they been found but *Counterfeits*, not a Man of that Age wou'd ever have yielded the Names of *great Prophet*, of *Meſſiah*, of a *Prophet mighty in deed and word*, which were the moſt exalted Titles they cou'd poſſibly beſtow, to one that made the *meaneſt* Figure and Appearance that poſſibly could be made.

Luk. vii. 16.
John vii. 31, 40, 41.
Luk. xxiv. 19.

But to ſhew the *Jews* to have been in our Saviour's Time, a People *nicely* inquiſitive, I ſhall reaſon a little upon ſeveral Paſſages of the Hiſtory of that Generation of Men.

CHAP. I.

§. 1. AND First, *John* vii. 2. *Now the Jews feaſt of the tabernacles was at hand.* v. 3. *His* Brethren *therefore ſaid unto him, depart hence, and go into Judæa, that thy diſciples alſo may ſee the works which thou doſt.* v. 4. *For there is no man that does any thing in ſecret and he himſelf ſeeketh to be known openly; if thou doeſt theſe things, ſhew thy ſelf to the World.* v. 5. *For neither did his brethren believe in him.*

§. 1. *Our Lord's own Kindred not over-credulous, but backward to Believe.*

It is very plain from this Paſſage, that our Lord's *Brethren* wou'd have had him departed from an *Obſcure* Place into one more *Publick*; *depart hence from Galilee and go into Judæa.* And the Reaſon of their putting him upon this, was, that his *Diſciples* might ſee the *Works* he did; becauſe theſe Works were in a great Meaſure loſt amongſt thoſe of his own *Kindred*; and wou'd get him more repute upon a more *publick* Stage, and where he was leſs known as to the Meanneſs of his Parentage.

Here then it is evident, that Jeſus had at that time *Diſciples*, and yet that his own Brethren were not of that Number, tho' they had ſeen him do *ſeveral* wonderful Works; becauſe they bid him go to his *Diſciples* and do the *ſame* Works before them. This proves that even thoſe of our Lord's *own* Family, were very far from being too Credulous, that they were not at all *bigotted* to him, tho' their *own* Relation; nor yet ready to extol

extol his Actions, as ſpeaking a *Divine* Power to have been lodged in him; but they ſtill ſuſpended their Belief in their own *Brother*, till they ſaw farther, and till they had had ſuch *Clouds* of Evidences in his behalf, as they were *no longer* able to withſtand.

One wou'd have thought, that if any People in all the whole Land of *Judæa* at that time, had been capable of giving in *crudely*, and without heſitation to the Belief of Jeſus, they wou'd have been his *Brethren*; to whom his working Miracles would have reflected ſome kind of Eſteem; it being reckon'd ſome degree of Credit to be related nearly to a Perſon fam'd for *ſtupendous* Actions, when *good* in their own Nature.

§. 2. But it ſeems theſe very *neareſt* Relations of our Lord's, had not then believed on him, when he had wrought wonderful Works *enough* to gain him Diſciples *elſewhere*, and ſeveral Miracles in their own preſence: And theſe Brethren of his, were perhaps in as low a Claſs for *Learning* and *Education*, as moſt of the *inferior* Sort at that Time in *Judæa*; which plainly demonſtrates, that the *Obſcure* and *Mean* at *that* Time had many of them a Warineſs as to *what* or *whom* they gave Credit; and were not ſo forward or ready of Aſſent, but they cou'd have Patience to reſt a while; not believing *every Man* upon hearing him, and *every thing* at firſt ſight; but tarrying till they had made ſuch farther Obſervations, as would warrant a *full* and *thorough* Conviction.

§. 2. This a ſign that People in the loweſt Claſs for Learning and Education were in that Age wary and incredulous.

I am perſuaded, it is not poſſible for the moſt *Learned*, the moſt *Wiſe*, and *Wary* Man, that lives *now*, to have guarded his Belief with reference to a Perſon pretending to be a Divine Prophet, with *greater* Circumſpection than the *Brethren* of our Lord guarded *theirs*; or could be more ſhy of being impoſed upon by *Juggle* under the pretence of Miracles, than theſe Members of the ſame Family which Jeſus the Worker of them belong'd to.

And yet tho' our Lord's own Family produc'd theſe Inſtances of *nicety* and *warineſs* to yield any Credit to Works pretending to be *miraculous*, is it often inſinuated notwithſtanding, as if the Men of that *Time* and *Place* were all of them *ſtupid*, forward to believe *any* thing, capable of being impos'd upon by the *falſeſt* Reaſoning or the *ſlighteſt* Juggles; a Character of them the moſt untrue that can be, and contradicted by Inſtances to be brought out of our Lord's own *Houſe* and *Lineage*.

But theſe Relations that did not believe on him at *firſt* when they had ſeen ſome Miracles, did yet afterward believe when they had ſeen *more*; and this Conviction of theirs after ſome *ſcruples*, ought abundantly to ſatisfy us, that the Works of Jeſus were of a Nature *truly* miraculous, and were able to bear the Teſt of a moſt *nice* and *ſcrupulous* Enquiry, and wou'd perfectly *extort* a Belief from every Man that wou'd beſtow ſuch an Enquiry upon them.

CHAP. II.

§. 1. LET us now ſee whether his own immediate *Followers*, his *Diſciples*, and the College of his *Apoſtles*, were a *credulous* Set of Folks, that without any Heſitation at all, wou'd ſwallow down the moſt *incredible* Tales; or whether they were not *ſcrupulouſly* exact and nice to a *Faultineſs*, being *infinitely* ſhy of believing any *aſtoniſhing* Propoſitions, though *abundantly* ſupported with Teſtimonies which might be fairly deem'd *ſatisfactory*.

§. 1. *The Diſciples and Apoſtles not over credulous, but ſcrupulouſly nice in believing.*

§. 2. We are told by St. *Mark*, *Chap.* xvi. *verſ.* 1. that *Mary Magdalen*, *that Mary the Mother of James*, *that Salome went to Chriſt's Sepulchre with ſweet Spices to anoint his Body*; and it appears from *Luke*'s Account, (*Chap.* xxiv. *verſ.* 10.) that *Joanna* was with theſe, and *other* Women. And they were very ſollicitous in the way, how to get the Stone roll'd from the Mouth of it: But coming to the Place, to their great Surprize, they found the Stone roll'd away, and the Sepulchre open; the *Angel* who had roll'd it away, and was then [a] ſitting upon it, told 'em, that *Jeſus* was riſen; and to ſatisfy themſelves *perfectly*, bid 'em [b] *look* into the Place where the Lord had lain, and

§. 2. *The Teſtimony of divers Women, with reſpect to the Reſurrection.*

Matth. xvi. 3.

[a] Matth. xxviii. 2.

[b] *verſ.* 6.

then tell his Diſciples, that he was gone before them into [c] *Galilee*. Theſe accordingly did [d] go *nearer* to look into the Sepulchre, and then ſaw two *Angels* more within, *one* particularly of theſe on [e] the *right-hand*, they more diſtinctly ſaw and heard, telling them the ſame as the Angel before; and moreover, that it was ſomewhat ſtrange [f] they ſhould ſeek him *there*: Becauſe when [g] alive, he had ſaid to 'em, that the Son of Man muſt be deliver'd *into the Hands of ſinful Men, and be crucify'd, and the third Day riſe again.* The Women remembring this, departed; and in their Departure, *Jeſus* ſhew'd himſelf to them, ſaying, *All Hail*, and they held him by the [h] Feet, and worſhipp'd him. *Jeſus* repeated the Orders of the Angels to 'em, to tell his Diſciples to go into *Galilee*, where they ſhou'd ſee him: But juſt before his appearing to theſe, he had ſeparately appear'd to *Mary* [i] *Magdalen.*

[c] *verſ.* 7.

[d] Luke xxiv. 4, 5.

[e] Mark xvi. 5.

[f] Luke xxiv. 5.

[g] Luke xxiv. 7.

[h] Matth. xxviii. 6.

[i] Mark xvi. 9.

Now though *all* of theſe repair'd to the Diſciples, told 'em *uniformly* and *diſtinctly*, *what* Angels they *ſaw*, what thoſe Angels ſaid, *whither* they order'd the Diſciples to *go*; and had *ſeen Jeſus* himſelf, had *heard* him *ſpeak*, had receiv'd *Orders* from him, and *touch'd* him: Though theſe Women had *Senſes* and *Capacities* perfectly to *know* and *judge*, whether a Corpſe ſtill continued to *lie* in a certain Place, or was *abſent* from it; though it were moſt highly improbable, that theſe

devout and *ſerious* Women ſhould all invent the Angels Rehearſal of a *Prophecy*, and their directing the Diſciples to repair to *Galilee*, if they had not *diſtinctly* heard all this: Though all theſe Women knew the *Face* and *Perſon* of *Jeſus* as well as the *Eleven* themſelves, and cou'd no more be deceiv'd, when they *ſaw* him, *heard* him, and *touch'd* him, than they:

Yet St. *Luke* tells us, *Chap.* xxiv. 11. that when they told theſe Things to the Apoſtles, or to the *Eleven*, and the *reſt*, their Words ſeem'd to them as *idle Tales*, and they did *not* believe 'em: And *Mark* xvi. 11. that the ſame Apoſtles, when they had heard that *Jeſus* was alive, and had been *ſeen* of *Mary Magdalen*, believed *not*.

Amongſt theſe Women, Reporters of the Reſurrection, there were moſt probably ſome of the beſt *Education* and *Fortune*. *Joanna* ſeems to have been one (who was the Wife of *Herod*'s Steward, a Perſon poſſeſs'd of one of the firſt Places of *Repute* and *Honour* at *Court*;) and ſeveral of the Women the Followers of *Jeſus*, *miniſtring* to him of their *Subſtance*, ſuppoſes ſeveral of 'em in very good Circumſtances: And *theſe* who now viſited his Sepulchre, had but juſt before been at the *Expence* of the Materials wherewith he was to have been Embalm'd. Luke viii. 3.

I only obſerve this, becauſe if there are any that imagine that Women of a more *advantageous* Education, wou'd not have been ſo *eaſily* capable of being *impos'd* upon, but wou'd better have been protected by that *Education* from common *Deluſions*, that our Great Maſter had *ſuch*

to

to attend him, *ſuch* to be amongſt the firſt Witneſſes and Reporters of his Reſurrection; and notwithſtanding all this, the *Eleven* did not credit the Report.

§. 3. *The Teſtimony of the* Emmaus *Diſciples.*

Luke xxiv. 13.

verſ. 31.

§. 3. After this *Jeſus* join'd himſelf to *two of his Diſciples going to Emmaus*, to whom he made himſelf known before he left 'em, in *breaking Bread:* And theſe preſently make it their Buſineſs to repair to the Diſciples, and aſſure 'em of their Knowledge, that all was true which the *Women* had reported from the *Angel's* Information, and of their having *ſeen Jeſus*, and which *Mary Magdalen*, of her having alſo *ſeen* him alive, for they *themſelves* had *ſeen* him *alive* too; and yet it is ſaid, *verſ.* 13. that *though theſe two went and told this to the reſidue or reſt of the Diſciples*, they ſtill held out againſt all theſe Teſtimonies, and *did not believe 'em.*

Neither was there a Victory to be gain'd over the amazing *Unbelief* of the *Eleven* Apoſtles, till *Jeſus ſhew'd* himſelf to 'em, as *they ſat at Meat*, verſ. 14. and *upbraided 'em with their Unbelief, and hardneſs of Heart, becauſe they believed not them which had ſeen him after he was riſen.*

And *well* he might upbraid 'em, becauſe they had carried their *Incredulity* ſo far, that it had no longer the Character of a commendable *Warineſs*, but of a groſs *Infidelity.*

§. 4. *The unreaſonableneſs of the eleven in rejecting the Evidences of the Reſurrection, which were given them.*

§. 4. 'Tis true, the firſt Report was brought 'em by ſeveral *Women:* But what, are we to deprive the Sex of the Prerogative of being *proper* Evidences in the

Caſe

Caſe of a *Fact*, when *all* Courts of Judicature have ever admitted of *their* Teſtimony of as full Weight, in every Caſe of this Sort, as that of *Men?* And very juſtly ſo: For it wou'd be marvelouſly ridiculous to pretend that they have not their Senſes, ſuch as *hearing*, *ſeeing*, and the like, in as full Perfection, as any of Mankind beſides.

The Apoſtles excepting to them therefore, as making a Report, whether a *Corpſe* was *ſtill* lying in a *certain* Place, and of their all of 'em *hearing* it diſtinctly ſaid by an *Angel*, that the Party ſought for was *Riſen*, and gone into *Galilee*; and that they ſhould tell the *Apoſtles* this, and *Peter* in Particular:

The excepting, I ſay, to all this, as highly improbable, only becauſe *Women* reported it, was a kind of reproaching the Wiſdom of *all* Judicatories of the *beſt* Credit for Underſtanding ſince the World began. And therefore *Jeſus* might well complain, that they did not do the *ſame* Juſtice to the firſt Reporters of his Reſurrection, as other *ſober* and *rational* Enquirers into *Facts* do.

For if all the *wiſeſt* Nations upon Earth, have frequently put *Men* of the firſt *Figure* and *Conſequence* to Death, when convicted of capital Crimes by *Female* Teſtimonies only, it was no better than Injuſtice to him, to diſallow of ſuch *Witneſſes* in *his* Behalf, which in every *other* Nation, and by all *other* People, were moſt *freely* admitted.

Then again, for their disbelieving *Mary Magdalen*, the reſt of the *Women*, and the two *Emmaus* Diſciples, who averr'd they had *ſeen* him,

he

he had abundant Reaſon to complain of their uſing him *ill* in this reſpect, and of their behaving towards him with a *ſuperlative* Infidelity.

They knew all of theſe to be *ſober* People, and of the greateſt *Probity*, that were vaſtly above the telling of a *Falſhood*; and when theſe *ſeriouſly* averr'd their having *ſeen* him of their own Knowledge, and of their having *commun'd* with him; This was in Effect ſaying, that God had form'd his *Son*'s Evidences with Senſes and Underſtanding *leſs* perfect than *theirs*, and the *reſt* of Mankind, which was a Prejudice to 'em very *unjuſt*, as well as *unreaſonable*.

For why elſe ſhould *Mary*, the other Women, and the two Diſciples *Senſes* deceive 'em any more than *theirs*? Or if *theſe* and the *two* Diſciples might be deceiv'd, and cou'd not be ſure of his being alive, though they had *ſeen* him, and *convers'd* with him, How cou'd *themſelves* be ſure he was alive, after he had *ſhewn* himſelf to, and *convers'd* with them?

§. 5. *The ill Conſequence of ſuch rejecting.*

§. 5. And behold the Conſequence! If it was reaſonable for *them* to doubt of his being *Riſen*, though it was reported to 'em by *many Witneſſes*, who *ſaw* and *convers'd* with him, whom they knew to be *diſcreet* and *faithful*; then wou'd it be no leſs reaſonable in *all* Men to *disbelieve* his being Riſen, when *they*, the Apoſtles, in their Turn, ſhou'd come to aver that they had *convers'd* with, and *ſeen* him when riſen again. So that herein they laid a Foundation to aboliſh all the Force of their *own* Teſtimony, and to vindicate the Infidelity of all that ſhou'd *disbelieve* the Goſpel: And not only ſo, but to deſtroy everywhere,

where, the Power of the *moſt* forcible Proofs, that either *God* or *Man* cou'd give to work upon Mens *Belief*.

For what can either of theſe do more, than to appeal to Mens *Senſes* for the Truth of *Facts*? And if we muſt not believe Perſons to be alive, when we *ſee* 'em, *converſe* together, and *hear* 'em ſpeak, we muſt dwell in an eternal *Diffidence* and *Uncertainty*.

Or if we were *not* to believe 'em to be alive, when *ſober conſciencious* People, that had been *long* acquainted with 'em, aſſure us they had juſt before *ſeen* the Parties, and *talk'd* with 'em: We muſt profeſs to believe nothing but what we *ſee* our ſelves; which wou'd be moſt *highly* unreaſonable, and is indeed contrary to the *Senſe*, and the *Practice* too, of all Mankind.

§. 6. Well therefore might our Lord thus ſay to theſe Diſciples; "Since I was *ſeen* of "divers People after my Reſurre- "ction, who *knew* me when *alive* as well as *you*, "my Apoſtles; ſince they were each of 'em Per- "ſons of as much *Serioufneſs* and *Probity* as your "ſelves; and ſince I gave to them the *ſame* "Proofs of my being alive, which I do *now* to "you, which is by *ſhewing* my ſelf to you in "*Perſon*, and *converſing* with you as when alive "before; I have all imaginable Reaſon to *upbraid* "you with your *Unbelief* and *hardneſs of Heart*, "in not crediting what they told you.

§. 6. *Our Lord's Complaint of the Unbelief of the Eleven, a juſt Complaint.*

§. 7. "But more eſpecially, "if it be conſider'd farther, that "I did not only *darkly* intimate "to you, when alive, that I ſhould riſe again,

§. 7. *Farther Cauſe for Complaint againſt the Eleven, and reſt.*

"by

" by ſuch Sayings as theſe which dropp'd from me;
" *viz. Deſtroy this Temple, and*
John ii. 19. " *in three Days I will raiſe it*
Matth. xii. 39, 40. " *again.* And *Jonas was a Sign*
" *unto this Generation, that as*
" *he was three Days and three Nights in the*
" *Whales Belly, the Son of Man ſhou'd be three*
" *Days in the Heart of the Earth:*
" But I moreover in ſo many Words told you,
" *That the Son of Man ſhould be*
Mark x. 33, 34. " *deliver'd into the Hands of the*
Matth. xx. 18, 19 " *Chief Prieſts; that they ſhould*
" *ſcourge and crucify him, and*
" *the third Day he ſhould riſe again.* I told you
" plainly, I had *Power to lay*
John x. 18. " *down my Life, and I had Power*
" *to take it again, and that all this I had received*
" *of my Father.* And as to *Peter* and *James*, and
" *John*, I had order'd 'em not to tell of my
" Transfiguration till *I was riſen from the Dead:*
" And they took ſo much Notice of what I ſaid,
" that they began to *reaſon*
Mark ix. 10. " *with themſelves, what this ri-*
" *ſing from the Dead ſhould mean.* So that I had
" Cauſe to think, that you were all *ſufficiently*
" prepar'd to expect the Tidings of my being
" *riſen* again, and to believe 'em as ſoon as
" brought. That *hardneſs* of Heart, therefore,
" and your *Unbelief*, deſerve to be both upbraid-
" ed on this Account.
" Add hereunto another Conſideration, which
" will render it *equally* inexcuſable, as *that* men-
" tion'd *before:* You had ſeen divers Inſtances
" when I was in the *Fleſh*, (ſubject to *Hunger*
" and *Thirſt*, to *Scourgings* and *Buffetings*,) of

" my

" my having rais'd the *Dead* to *Life*; as *Laza-*
" *rus*, the *Widow* of *Nain*'s *Son*, (*Luke* vii. 15.)
" the Ruler of *the Synagogues Daughter*, (*Luke*
" viii. 56.) This might have inſtructed you,
" that it was poſſible for a *Spirit* to be united to
" a *Body* it had once left. Think you then, that
" my *own* Spirit cou'd not re-enter my own Body,
" as the Spirits of others had done theirs; or
" that it when *diſembody'd*, cou'd do leſs for it
" ſelf, than when *clogg'd* with a *frail* Tabernacle of
" *Fleſh* it cou'd do for *others*? Is this a kind of
" Reaſoning *juſt* and *concluſive*, and not rather
" very *fallacious* and *abſurd*?

" Again, ſince you had ſeen Inſtances of the
" more *ignoble* and *obſcure* having been rais'd,
" why ſhou'd it be thought incredible, when you
" heard that I, whom you allow'd to have been
" a Prophet mighty in *Deed* and *Word*, who
" had by numberleſs ſtupendous Actions, prov'd
" my ſelf the Son of God with *Power*, was rais'd
" to *Life*, as *Lazarus* and others had been before?

" So that there were theſe egregious Inconſiſten-
" cies in all your *Unbelief*, in thinking it unlikely
" that God ſhould do that for one of *higher* Dig-
" nity, which he had done for thoſe of *lower*;
" and to think that my *diſembody'd* Spirit was
" unable to do or obtain *that* for *it ſelf*, which it
" had done and obtain'd for others, whilſt yet
" clogg'd with an *Houſe* of *Clay*.

I have enlarg'd the more upon this amazing In-
ſtance of the Eleven Apoſtles disbelieving a well-
atteſted Fact in their Maſter's Favour, becauſe the
Youth and *Giddy* of this Age, that greedily ſwal-
low every Thing leading to Infidelity, that ridi-
culouſly think themſelves the *only* Perſons that
have ever liv'd in the World who were *juſtly*

ſcru-

ſcrupulous, and *exactly* enough inquiſitive, are carried away into a moſt *abſurd*, a moſt *falſe* and *fooliſh* Notion, that the Apoſtles were the moſt *credulous*, the moſt *implicit* and *forward* Believers that ever liv'd, ſwallowing every Thing without *any* Doubt or Enquiry: Whereas they were on the contrary as ſcrupulous of giving into the Belief of *any* ſtrange Thing, as the moſt *wary* and *diffident* in the preſent conceited Age can poſſibly be.

§. 8. *The amazing Inſtance of the Incredulity of* Thomas.

§. 8. There is *one* remaining ſtill in this ſacred College, of whom no particular Mention has been made, who in point of Diſbelief, did *many* Lengths outgo his Brethren: And this was *Thomas*, who not happening to have been with the reſt, when *Jeſus* appear'd to 'em, not only rejected all that was told by the firſt *Female* Reporters, about his Lord's being Riſen, not only ſcorn'd the Teſtimony of *Mary*, and the two *Emmaus* Diſciples, but refus'd to believe upon the Aſſeveration of *all* the reſt.

John xx. 25.

Neither was this the utmoſt Limit of his *Unbelief*, for he declar'd he wou'd not ſo much as truſt *himſelf*, unleſs he was near enough to challenge the Body again by the moſt *indubitable* Marks, and was permitted not barely to *ſee*, but to *thruſt* his Fingers into the Prints of the *Nails* and *Spear*, and allow'd to *explore* the Wounds made in his Maſter's Fleſh.

verſ 27.

What will this prodigious Inſtance after all avail? The Patrons of Infidelity have Multitudes of the young *Gentry* ſo *blindly* devoted to 'em, that they can *eaſily* make 'em believe, in Defiance

of

of all this, that there was not a *Man* living in the Time of our Saviour's working his Miracles, that had the leaſt Dram of *Curioſity* or *Diffidence*, or that ever examin'd the Reality of any *ſingle* Act which was miraculous, but *ſtupidly* yielded an Aſſent to every ſtrange Thing that was told 'em, without *any* manner of Heſitation whatever.

An Inſtance of Bewitchery *this*, which no Age can parallel; that the Youth of a Kingdom ſhou'd be ſpirited up into a generous Diſdain of having any *Shackles* put upon their Underſtanding; while at the ſame Time they are made to believe the moſt *Romantick*, *Palpable* Untruths, and what *any* Man of Conſideration wou'd be infinitely aſham'd of.

CHAP. III.

§. 1. After having examin'd the Behaviour of the *Kinsfolk*, the Acquaintance, and the *Apoſtles* of our Lord, and found every of theſe cloath'd with all the *Diffidence* which the moſt *wakeful* Seeker after Truth cou'd require; having found 'em rather entertain *Diſtruſts*, where there was thorough Sufficiency of *Evidence* to remove 'em; we have a much eaſier Task upon our Hands, when we ſhall attempt to ſhow, That the *reſt* of the People of *Judea* at that Time, who were *Strangers* to him more than theſe, were diſpos'd to ſift *every* Thing, and did in very deed labour

§. 1. *The great Exactneſs of the* Jews, *in the trying the Truth of our Saviour's Miracles.*

to inform themſelves of the Truth of what Acts of his pretended to be *Miraculous*.

It were indeed needleſs to attempt this, becauſe all the whole Hiſtory of that Time is full of peeviſh *Cavils* and *Exceptions*, to almoſt every Thing *Jeſus* either *ſaid* or *did*; which abundantly argues 'em to be tinctur'd with no Diſpoſitions to caſt a Mantle upon *any* Thing, that ſhou'd have ſavour'd of *Juggle* and *Impoſture*. And therefore the fewer Inſtances will do.

§. 2. *A particular Inſtance of it.*

§. 2. There is in the Ninth of St. *John*, a remarkable Relation of the Cure of a *Blind* Man, who was thus from his *Birth*.

When the Man was firſt brought, he was ſo *apparently* blind, that the Diſciples, who were preſent, began to reaſon upon the general Cauſe of any Man's being *ſo* born; which they wou'd hardly have been ridiculous enough to have done, if the Perſon preſent had not been *really* blind beyond all manner of *Doubt*.

John ix.

verſ. 2.

Jeſus diſapproves the *Cauſes* they gave of the Man's Blindneſs, and ſays, it was neither for any *Sin* of the Man's in any former State, nor yet for his Parent's *Fault* in this; but God had ſo order'd it, that he might manifeſt his *Power* in this miraculous Cure.

verſ. 3.

Jeſus then addreſſes himſelf to the *Cure* of the Man who was born Blind; and the more to raiſe the Attention of the Beholders, has Recourſe to ſuch an *aſtoniſhing* way of recovering him, as wou'd ſeem rather to

verſ. 6.

put

put *out* the Eyes of one that cou'd have *ſeen* already, than to recover 'em to one that was already *Blind:*

For ſpitting upon the *Ground*, where he accidentally was at that Time, he makes a *Clay*, and when he had anointed the Man's Eyes with it, he bids him waſh in the Pool *Siloam*; upon the doing of which, his *Eyes* were brought to *ſee.*

There having been apparently no *natural* Quality, either in the *Dirt* of the Place he happen'd to be in, or in *Siloam*'s Water, that cou'd poſſibly effect ſuch a *Cure*, any more than in *Jordan*'s *Water* to cure *Naaman*'s *Leproſy:* It was rightly wonder'd at, as a Cure *truly* Miraculous.

The blind Man having ſat in a *publick* Place to *beg*, when under the Misfortune of his Blindneſs, was *generally* known to *all* that uſually paſs'd that way, as alſo to the *Neighbours* near unto whom he liv'd. *verſ.* 8, 9.

Theſe finding the ſame Man appearing to them to have his *Sight*, whom they had obſerv'd to have been *Blind*, and to have ſat lately in a publick Place to raiſe their Compaſſion as ſuch, began to *reaſon* upon the Matter, and to ſuſpect themſelves *miſtaken.*

Many of theſe averr'd him to be the very *ſame*; thoſe who did not, allow'd him to be ſo *like* him, that they thought it not improbable but he was; but the Man himſelf, who was within the hearing of this Debate, put an end to it, by aſſuring 'em he was the *very* Man.

Had the People here *inſtantly* allow'd him to have been the *ſame* without *any* Demur, they might have been cenſur'd perhaps, as not having inform'd themſelves of the *ſameneſs* of the Per-

ſon with ſufficient *Curioſity* and *Exactneſs*; but it having not been without debating the Matter, and very diligently obſerving again his Features, that they pronounc'd their Opinions, it cou'd not be ſaid that they were the *raſheſt* of all Men, in aſſenting to a *ſtrange* Appearance as *true*.

When the Man cou'd not be excepted againſt, but he appear'd *verily* the ſame; both from the Conceſſions of all that had formerly *ſeen* and *known* him, and alſo from his *own* Confeſſion:

verſ. 10. They next want to know *how* this was done, and by *whom*; and when he had declar'd one *Jeſus* to have been the Perſon, and the *manner* of his curing him: They in the next Place ask, *Where* this *Jeſus* was? Very probably, that they might examine *him* as ſtrictly, as they had done the *Man*.

verſ. 13. But the Perſon reſtor'd to his Sight, not being able to tell 'em where *Jeſus* then was; the Examiners bring the Man to the *Phariſees*, a *curious inquiſitive* Sect, and many of 'em very *learned*, and that wou'd not fail to ſift any Thing thoroughly, which wou'd reflect Credit to *one*, who was *continually* crying out againſt their *Hypocriſy*; to the end that theſe, by making a *ſecond* Enquiry, might find out, if there had been any Error in *theirs*, who had made the *former*.

The *Phariſees* trace over the *ſame* Queſtions the Man had been ask'd before, as *who* cur'd him? And with *what?* And when the Man continu'd in the *ſame* Account, as *before* given, with a perfect Conſiſtency: They finding nothing to object to the *Certainty* of the *Cure*, endeavour however to ſink the Character of *Jeſus*, that wrought

wrought it, and charge him as a Perſon that cou'd not be acceptable to God, *becauſe he broke the Sabbath* by curing a Man on that Day. But others of 'em controuling this Objection, by ſaying, that God wou'd never put ſo ſignificant a Power into a Man's Hands, if he did not *like* him, the Cavil dropp'd. *verſ.* 16.

However, next, that they might be moſt *abſolutely* aſſur'd, that this was *once* a blind Man, and had been ſo from his *Birth*, which it came into their Heads then to queſtion; they ſend for the Man's *Parents*, who cou'd not be miſtaken in their *own* Son, and muſt know if he had been *born* Blind, and for *how* many Years from his Birth he had *ſo* continu'd. *verſ.* 18.

The Parents when call'd aſſure 'em, that *this* was their Son, that he was *born* Blind, but knew not how he came by his *Sight*.

Then the *Phariſees* began to examine the Man *afreſh*; upon this he ask'd 'em, why they ſhou'd want to hear that *again*, which he had ſo clearly related to 'em *before*; and whether they did it with a Deſign to become the Diſciples of the great Benefactor of his, to whom he ow'd his *Sight?* This the *Phariſees* heard with the *utmoſt* Indignation, and preſently after the Man's defending *Jeſus*'s Character, they excommunicate him. *verſ.* 27.

Can any Man now, after the reading ſuch an Hiſtory as the foregoing, pronounce *this* to have been a Generation of Men, diſpos'd to believe *every* thing *Miraculous*, ſaid to have been done by

Jeſus, with too much Eaſineſs, and a Credulity which was highly blameable?

§. 3. None in this Age cou'd ſhow more Exactneſs in enquiring into the Truth of a Fact, than in the Inſtance before.

§. 3. We may from this *very* Inſtance defy all the Infidels of the preſent Age, to name any *one* Step which *themſelves* cou'd have taken, *more* than the *Phariſees* did in the Caſe before us, to come at the Knowledge of a Matter of *Fact*. Neither is it poſſible for 'em to ſet themſelves with greater Rancour and Peeviſhneſs to write againſt Chriſtianity *now*, than the *Phariſees* did *then*, to ſift and cavil at *every* Action our Saviour did, which was reported to be *Miraculous*.

And yet after all, the Facts were ſo *apparently* Miraculous, ſo *plain* and *evident* beyond *all* Contradiction, that *nothing* can be ſaid againſt 'em; unleſs it ſhou'd be ſaid, that Men at *that* time of Day, cou'd not come at the Knowledge of a Matter of Fact done juſt in their *Neighbourhood*, though they *endeavour'd* it *all* they cou'd, whilſt the Parties were *all* yet *alive* that were concern'd in it, though they *appear'd* upon the *Spot*, and gave their Evidence with the *utmoſt* Clearneſs and Conſiſtency; unleſs they alſo aver, that People cou'd not know their *own* Neighbours, nor even Parents their *own* Children; nor yet whether they were *born* Blind, nor whether they cou'd *afterwards* ſee.

§. 4. The Conſequence of denying a Miracle after it.

§. 4. And this wou'd be either to aver ſuch a *Defect* in the human *Senſes*, that they are *never* to be truſted to as Conveyancers of *Knowledge*, and Reporters of *Facts*; or elſe that ſomewhat happen'd to the People of *Judea*, during the Time of our Saviour's converſing with 'em,

which

which was never known to happen to *any* Generation of Men, that *ever* liv'd upon the Earth before: Which was, that with all their *Care* not to be deceiv'd, and with all their *Diligence* and *Wariness* to uſe their Senſes aright, they cou'd none of 'em know their *own* Children again when they *ſaw* 'em, cou'd tell when a Man was *blind*, and when *not*, when a Man was *dead*, and when *alive*.

To ſay *this*, wou'd be to ſay ſomewhat the moſt *Romantick* that ever was; to ſay the *former*, would be to deſtroy *all* the Foundations of *Natural* Religion; and not only ſo, but to aboliſh, as of *no* Force, *every* Evidence given in any Court of *Judicature*, that reſted upon the Reports of Mens *Senſes*; and nothing were then to be admitted, which Multitudes of *credible* Perſons ſhou'd aver they clearly and diſtinctly *ſaw* and *heard*.

§. 5. Here I can't omit a *Remark* which is moſt juſt and natural; and that is, that in denying the Truth and Reality of *each* of the Goſpel Miracles, the Infidel muſt in very deed believe as *many* Miracles to have been wrought in ſupport of his Opinion of the *Falſhood* of 'em, as we in *ours* of their *Truth*, and *many* more.

§. 5. The Infidels in denying the Truth of ſuch Miracles, muſt profeſs to believe more Miracles than we.

Thus for Inſtance, in the raiſing of *Lazarus* from the Dead, we in defending the Truth of this, ſpeak of it only as *one* ſingle Miracle wrought; but was I to *deny* its Truth, I muſt then allow as *many Miracles* to have been wrought, as there were *Perſons*, whoſe Senſes and Judgment were in a *miraculous* and an *unaccountable* manner at *that* Time deceived.

Thus if I aver that *Lazarus* continued *dead*, then I muſt ſay that the Perſons who verily thought

they *ſaw* him riſe out of the Grave, that *unbound* him to let him *go* to his own Houſe again, that thought they ſat down with *Lazarus* at an *Entertainment*, and thought they *eat* and *drank*, and *commun'd* with him, as a Perſon *alive*, were each of 'em Perſons upon whom a *Miracle* was wrought.

It is the ſteady Order of *Nature*, that Men ſhou'd *not* ſeem to ſee a *Perſon* in *Company* with 'em, when there is *none*; nor to fancy they ſee that Perſon *eat* and *drink*, and *hear* him *talk*; nor to comport themſelves towards him for Days, and Weeks, and Years, when *abſent* and *dead*, as if he were *preſent* and *alive*.

Now this ſtedfaſt Order of *Nature* was overruled, with reſpect to *each* of the *great* Multitude of *Jews*, that were under a firm Perſuaſion that they *ſaw Lazarus* walk when unbound to his Houſe, and were convinc'd they ſaw him *eat* as themſelves did, and *heard* him *talk*, and therefore continu'd to *aſſociate* with him, as long as he ſeem'd to live amongſt 'em, which might be for *Months* or *Years*.

For if they did thus, and yet *Lazarus* was all the time *dead*, and in his Grave, *Nature* was then controul'd in a *vaſt* variety of Inſtances; but in the Caſe of *Lazarus*'s being really rais'd to Life but in *one* only. And if we in believing *Lazarus* to have been *rais'd*, believe ſomewhat that's *ſtrange*, they who averr'd him to have continu'd *dead*, muſt believe ſomewhat much *ſtranger*.

So in like manner, if in believing the Man who was born *Blind* to have been brought to his *Sight*, we believe ſomething *aſtoniſhing*, they who deny it, muſt believe ſomething much *more aſtoniſhing* than that.

They muſt *believe* that the Man *himſelf* was deceiv'd, and thought he *cou'd* ſee, when he *cou'd not*.

They

They muſt believe his *Relations*, his *Neighbours*, and the *Phariſees*, to have been *all* deceiv'd as much: For they were *all* convinc'd that he gave indubitable Demonſtrations by his whole Comportment, that he had his *Sight*, when he had not.

Nature was then controul'd in *manifold* Inſtances, inſtead of *one*; and in the room of believing *one* Perſon to have had the Faculty of *ſeeing* given him, who had it not before, they muſt believe a *Multitude* to have been depriv'd of that Faculty, who had it: And depriv'd in a manner perfectly *miraculous*, even without any Violence or Hurt done to the Organ of Sight.

The Infidel then does moſt apparently make a *Complication* of *Miracles* for *every Miracle* he denies; and whilſt endeavouring to *aboliſh* the Belief of 'em, does without his knowing it, but the more *ratify* that Belief.

CHAP. IV.

§. 1. BUT to return: No need is there to ſearch the New Teſtament for *more* Inſtances of the like Nature with this, of the Perſon Blind from his *Birth*; this *one* being *abundant* Proof of the Spirit which was abroad in *Judæa*, when Jeſus convers'd *there*, and that he had moſt certainly been *diſcover'd*, had he ever endeavour'd to put upon that Generation any *ſham* or *counterfeit* Miracles, which was continually upon the *Watch* to find out any *Juggle* or *Impoſture*.

§. 1. *Inſtances of the* Jews *of every Sect narrowly watching all the Actions of Jeſus.*

Nothing can be farther requiſite to convince us of the Vigilance of the *Jews* at *that* Seaſon not to be deceived, than the giving ſuch Inſtances

of

of *this*, as will force us to allow, that they moſt *narrowly watch'd* him, and that *continually*, and wou'd have been moſt *glad* to have detected him as an *Impoſtor*. All which will ſurely convince us, that no ſuch *Stage* of Action was choſe for Chriſt to work his Miracles on, where the Inhabitants were *ignorant*, *ſluggiſh*, *lazy*; *indifferent*, of no *Curioſity*; *ſlow* and *backward* to *Search* and *Reaſon*, but *ſwift* to *Believe*: But where on the contrary, they were *Learned*, *Induſtrious*, *Active*, *Curious*, *Vigilant* Enquirers, *ſuſpicious* and *quick* to *Cavil* and *Object*, but *backward* to *allow* of Truths when *reaſonably* and *ſatisfactorily* prov'd; to the End it might be truly ſaid of the Perſons becoming his Diſciples, that they reaſon'd themſelves into the being *ſuch*, and that it was meer *dint* of *Evidence* and *force* of *Conviction*, which *drag'd* 'em into the Belief of what at firſt they were exceedingly *prejudic'd* to.

As an Inſtance of the *Curioſity*, *Malevolence* and *Prejudice* of the *Jews*, when the Son of Man liv'd amongſt 'em, take the following Paſſages.

§. 2. *The Firſt Inſtance of this.*

§. 2. Mark iii. v. 2. tells us, *They* Watch'd *him, whether he wou'd heal the man with the wither'd hand on the ſabbath day.*

Obſerv. When an Opportunity of *curing* any one preſented itſelf, there were inſtantly Spies about him to ſee, Firſt whether a *Cure* was wrought; and if no Objection cou'd be made to the *Certainty* of its being *effected*; then, Secondly, if any cou'd with reference to any *other* Circumſtance of it, ſuch as *Time*, or *Manner*, or *Place*.

§. 3. *A Second Inſtance of it.*

§. 3. Mark viii. 11. *The* Phariſees *came forth and began to* queſtion *with him, ſeeking of him a ſign from heaven.*

Obſerv.

Obſerv. What other Conſtruction can poſſibly be put upon *this* Behaviour of the *Phariſees*, than that they endeavour'd to expoſe his *Ignorance*, if they poſſibly cou'd, and to ſee if he wou'd be mean enough to proſtitute his Miracles to every captious Perſon, that ſhould come with a *pure* Intent to *Sneer* and *Cavil.*

§. 4. Mark xii. 13. *And they ſend unto him certain of the* Phariſees *and* Herodians, *to* catch *him in his words.* §. 4. *A Third Inſtance.*

V. 18. *Then came the Sadduces.*

V. 28. *And one of the Scribes came and ask'd him, Which is the firſt commandment of all,*

Obſerv. Here we have the *Phariſees*, the *Herodians*, the *Sadduces*, the *Scribes*, all of them in their turns *attacking* him, laying wait for ſomewhat *weak* and *inadvertent* to come from him, which might tarniſh his Reputation.

§. 5. Luke v. 21. *And the* Scribes *and the* Phariſees *began to* reaſon, *ſaying, Who is this which ſpeaketh blaſphemies; who can forgive ſins but God?* §. 5. *A Fourth Inſtance.*

Obſerv. Here it is exceedingly apparent, that the moment any thing eſcap'd his Lips, which ſeem'd to render him obnoxious; it was immediately ſeiz'd upon, with the ſevereſt *Reflections* and *Remarks*; and doubtleſs he had upon this account been proclaim'd an *Impudent* Uſurper of God's Prerogative.

But when, v. 24. *He ſaid unto the ſick of the palſey, ariſe and take up thy couch and go unto thine houſe*, the poor helpleſs *Paralytic* was enabled inſtantly to execute that Command; theſe Spies of his, v. 26. were all amaz'd to ſee *Sickneſſes* and

Infir-

Infirmities thus commanded away with a Word; and *confeſs'd*, ſaying, we have ſeen *ſtrange* things to Day.

§. 6. *A Fifth Inſtance.*

§. 6. Luk. xi. 15. *But ſome of them ſaid, he caſteth out devils through Belzebub the chief of the Devils.*

Obſerv. Here it appears, that upon *watching* him, and finding that he deliver'd ſeveral from the Moleſtation of *Evil* Spirits; they conſider how *this* cou'd be accounted for, and yet be able with conſiſtency to attack him as an *Impious* Man, and defeat all that *good* Reputation Jeſus might poſſibly win by Actions, that proclaim'd him abundant in *Power* and *Charity* both: And the only way to do this, being to ſuppoſe him enabled to *caſt out* Devils by being in *Confederacy* with the Devil himſelf, they aver that he did it by a *Diabolical* Power.

§. 7. *A Sixth Inſtance.*

§. 7. Luk. xvii. 11. *And behold there was a woman, that had a ſpirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bow'd together.*

This Woman was cur'd; but v. 14. *The* Ruler *of the Synagogue anſwer'd with* indignation, *becauſe Jeſus healed on the Sabbath Day.*

Obſerv. Had the Ruler of the Synagogue been able to have objected *ought* to the Miracle, doubtleſs he wou'd have done *that* in the firſt Place; and that Indignation which prompted him to quarrel with Jeſus for the *Day*, would ſurely have urg'd him to except to the *Truth* of the *Miracle*, if there had been *room*.

But this readineſs at *all* Times and upon *every* Occaſion to fall out, demonſtrates at leaſt, that

that Jeſus cou'd never have appear'd among any Generation of Men, that could be leſs diſpos'd to lean *favourably* to his Side.

§. 8. Luk. xiv. 1. *And it came to paſs, as he went into the houſe of one of the* chief Phariſees *on the* Sabbath *day, that they* watch'd *him.* v. 2. *And behold there was a certain man brought before him, which had the dropſy.* v. 3. *And Jeſus anſwering, ſpake unto the* Lawyers *and* Phariſees, *ſaying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?* v. 4. *And they held their peace; and he took him and heal'd him, and let him go.* v. 5. *And anſwer'd them, ſaying, Which of you ſhall have an Aſs or an Ox fall into a pit, and will not ſtraitway pull him out on the Sabbath day.* v. 6. *And they cou'd not anſwer him again to theſe things.*

§. 8. *A Seventh Inſtance.*

Obſerv. The obvious Remark upon this is, that the *Phariſees* and *Lawyers watch'd* him in *this*, as in the Caſe of almoſt *every* other Miracle. And that the Place *where*, and Time *when* he wrought this Miracle are both very remarkable.

As to the *Place*, it was done in the Houſe of a *Phariſee*, and that one of the *Chief* of them. Certainly, had Jeſus needed any *Fraud* or *Diſguize*, he wou'd never have choſen the Houſe of a *Phariſee* above *all* Men to do a miraculous Cure in; where it was not imaginable the Owner wou'd conſent to be a Partner with him in any *Juggle*, but wou'd on the contrary have faſten'd upon *any* Opportunity of finding him *tripping*, to expoſe him; and this demonſtrated that Jeſus ſought for no ſhelter, no convenient Stages of Actions, where a Curtain might be drawn over any *Tricks*

The

The *Time* was ſomewhat Remarkable alſo, for it was the *Sabbath*, the Day upon which they more diligently *watch*'d him for the ſake of cavilling at any Works *miraculous* wrought upon it.

In *this* Place, and on *this* Day, Jeſus firſt ask'd (upon the Dropſical Man's preſenting himſelf for a Cure) whether it was lawful to heal him? This ſuppoſes the Man to have been ſo *apparently* Dropſical, that it cou'd *not* be objected to; becauſe if he had not, his Spies wou'd preſently have ſaid, what need that Queſtion, when there is no Body here that wants *Healing?* It is apparent then, that he attempted not to *Heal* him, till it was *viſible*, that *all* the Company allow'd the Party needed to be *Healed*, and then he *openly* heal'd him on the *Sabbath* day, and in an *Houſe* of one of the *Chief* of the *Phariſees*, whilſt ſeveral *Lawyers* and *Phariſees watch'd* him; and then vindicated his Practice, from the Actions of the Spectators themſelves, who ſcrupl'd not to do the like Acts of Mercy to a *Brute*, when fallen into the Pit on a Sabbath, which he ſhew'd to an *Human* Creature.

§. 9. *The Eighth Inſtances.*

§. 9. Luk. xv. 1, 2. *Then drew near to him all the Publicans and Sinners for to hear him; and the* Phariſees *and* Scribes *murmur'd, ſaying, This man receiveth ſinners, and eateth with them.*

Obſerv. All the Remark I ſhall *now* make, is, That the Behaviour of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* here is perfectly of a Piece with that in *all* the other Inſtances; and ſhews them to have *narrowly* obſerv'd every Action of Jeſus, and to have made the moſt *ill-natur*'d Remarks upon them, that the perverſeſt *Enmity* cou'd deviſe.

§. 10.

§. 10. Luk. xix. 5, 7. *Jeſus ſaid unto him, Zacheus make haſte and come down, for to day I muſt abide at thy houſe. And when they ſaw it, they* all murmur'd, *ſaying, he was gone to be gueſt with a man that is a ſinner.*

§. 10. *The Ninth Inſtance.*

Obſerv. Still are the Spectators of our Saviour's Acts upon the *carping* and *quarrelling* Side; and cou'd then *ſuch* a Generation of Men be ſuppos'd to have been *aſleep* all the Time he was amongſt them; to have had no *Curioſity* to enquire into *any* thing he did, but to let every *Act* of his ſlide away without *any* Remarks, as if they all combin'd as it were to *connive* at Impoſtors, when their whole Behaviour ſpeaks them the very *Reverſe.*

§. 11. Luk. xix. 20. *And the* chief Prieſts *and the* Scribes, *the ſame hour, ſought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people, for they perceiv'd he had ſpoken this parable againſt them. And they* watch'd *him, and ſent forth* ſpies, *which ſhould feign themſelves juſt men, that they might* take hold *of his* words, *that ſo they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.*

§. 11. *The Tenth Inſtance.*

V. 27. *Then came to him certain of the* Sadducees.

Obſerv. Here we have the *Chief-Prieſts*, we have the *Scribes*, we have the *Sadduces* watching him, and the two former ſending out *Spies*, that ſhou'd attend him, and endeavour all that was poſſible to *entrap* him in his Words; and indeed they propos'd ſuch *artful* Queſtions, as wou'd eaſily have drawn a Perſon of *common* Foreſight and Sagacity into their Snares.

§. 12.

§. 12. *What the Proof ariſing from theſe Teſtimonies.*

§. 12. And now *what* do all theſe Teſtimonies amount to? Even to prove the egregious *Folly* and *Stupidity* of divers of the youthful Infidels in this Age; that are made to think, contrary to all *Senſe* and *Reaſon*, that the People *Jeſus* wrought all his Miracles amongſt, were *negligent* and *incurious*, too *ſluggiſh* and *lazy* to ſearch into the *Truth* of Things; that they were in no degree *notable* and *cunning*; that every thing was admitted for *Truth* without *prying* into it. Whereas there never was a *ſubtler* and more *inquiſitive* Set of Men that ever liv'd, that more *vigilantly* ſet themſelves to the Diſcovery of any *Frauds*, and were more ſhy to ſurrender their *Belief* to any *uncommon* Reports of Stupendous Actions done.

This Jeſus found ſo true, that when the Centurion ſhow'd an uncommon Faith in the Caſe of his Servant being heal'd, he declar'd, *he had not found ſo great faith no not in Iſrael*; the *Jews* were generally *averſe* to believe his *Power*, and much more ſo than *divers Gentiles*.

Matt. viii. 10.

§. 13. *No Rank or Order of Men in* Judæa *too credulous and injurious.*

§. 13. Who then were the Perſons in that Age, that were chargeable with abominable Negligence, with being Stupid and Credulous?

Were they the *Chief Prieſts*? were they the *Scribes*? were they the *Phariſees*? were they the *Sadduces*? No: For every of theſe were *Spies*, *watching* him *continually* themſelves, or ſetting *others* to do it, *ſcanning* every *Word* and *Action* with a peeviſh *Exactneſs*

What

What then, were they his own *Diſciples?* Nay: For theſe did every of them reject ſuch *Evidences* and *Teſtimonies* in the Caſe of his *Reſurrection*, as *all* the wiſeſt *Judges* in all Generations have ever admitted for the Proof of *Facts*; and upon which they have always ventur'd to pronounce *Sentence*, even the hard one of *Death*, when the Parties judg'd have been convicted of *Capital* Crimes upon the *Like*.

Who at length were *theſe* marvelouſly prejudic'd in his *Favour*, too *forward* and *ſwift* to *believe*; were they his own *Relations?* Not even *theſe*, for ſeveral *others* believ'd on him *ſooner* than *they*, and were *Diſciples* of an earlier date than his very *Brethren*.

And yet theſe *Diffident Relations*, theſe *incredulous* Diſciples, *many* of the *Prieſts* alſo his moſt avow'd *Enemies*, his continual *Spies*, at length *believed*. *For when the Diſciples multiplyed in Jeruſalem, a* great *company of the* Prieſts *were obedient alſo to the faith.* Act. vi. 7.

§. 14. We are able therefore eaſily to Anſwer the *Difficulty* uſually ſtarted *here*, viz. Whence ſhou'd it come to paſs that ſo *Few* ſhould believe the *Goſpel*, if the *Miracles* wrought in its favour were ſo convincing? §. 14. *The Difficulty Anſwer'd, why no more believed.*

For the Numbers believing it were not *Few*, but *Great*; *many* there were that *Believed* in Jeſus, who had not the Courage *publickly* to avow that Belief: So that the Numbers of Perſons believing the Goſpel were conſiderably *great*, taking into the Computation all that *Profeſs'd* it, and all that *Believed* it too.

§. 15. *Many believed the Gospel secretly, who did not openly profess it.*

§. 15. We are told of *Nicodemus who came to Jesus by Night* Joh. iii. 1. of *Joseph of Arimathæa, that was a Disciple, but secretly for fear of the Jews.* (John xix. 38.) *And that nevertheless among the* chief rulers *also* many *believed on Jesus; but because of the Pharisees they did not* confess him, *lest they should be put out of the Synagogue.*

We are inform'd moreover of the *Parents* of the Person brought to his *Sight*, that they desir'd the Examiners of them to ask their *Son* himself about his having his *Sight*, as fearing the *Jews*, who had agreed to put *all out of the Synagogue, who should* confess *Jesus.*

John xix. 23.

Hence it is plain, to a Demonstration, that a great *many Believed* in Jesus for his Miracles sake, who dared not *confess* him; and that therefore it is a great Mistake to think, that the Number of such as *Believed* in Jesus was no greater, than was the Number of such as *publickly* profess'd that Belief.

We are sure then, that if the more *Secret* Believers were *many*, the *Publick* Professors and open Followers of Jesus were vastly Numerous. For *perceive ye, said the Pharisees, how ye prevail nothing? Behold the* World *is gone after him*, John xii. 19.

So that tho' it might be truly said, When he came to his *own*, his *own* did not receive him; partly because those of his *own Kindred* and *Neighbourhood* did not at first so favourably *receive* him, nor so early *believe* as several *others*; and partly because the *Government* of *Judea* did not

own

own him, and the Rulers there who believed, dare not openly declare their Sentiments; yet conſidering the *fewneſs* of the firſt Labourers, the Harveſt of Believers was truly *great*. Chriſtianity did not indeed immediately become the *Eſtabliſh'd* Religion, nor had the *Government* on its ſide: But the firſt Harveſt of the Church conſiſted of Believers of every kind, of *Rulers*, of *Subjects*, of *Prieſts*, of the *Laity*; and yet theſe ow'd not their Diſcipleſhip to a *raſh*, *precipitate* Belief, but one that was founded upon *juſt* and *weighty* Reaſons.

§. 16. The Blind Man brought to his Sight, had form'd a *Rational* Inference from the Power Jeſus ſhew'd in giving it to him, and argu'd with the *Jews* accordingly.

§. 16. The rational Grounds of their belief; and firſt, of that of the lower Sort.

Why herein is a *Marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath open'd mine eyes.* V. 31. *Now we know that God heareth not ſinners*; not lodging ſuch *Significant* Powers with them, that are *unacceptable* to him; *but if any man be a worſhipper of God and does his will, him he heareth:* Granting the Favour of ſuch mighty Cures to *none* but his proper *Votaries*, and them that moſt *devoutly* ſerve him.

John ix. 30.

V. 32. *Since the world began was it not heard, that any man open'd the eyes of one that was born blind.* This is a Cure of an *amazing* kind, exceeding all Skill which is *purely* Human.

V. 33. If *this man were not of God, he cou'd do nothing.* Were not the Almighty *Power* of God preſent to him, he cou'd do no ſuch *unheard* of Cures as this.

Here we have a *formal* and *juſt* Reaſoning, whereon to warrant his Perſuaſion, that Jeſus acted by a *Divine* Power and Authority, before he had *actually* and *formally* profeſs'd his Belief and became his Diſciple; which he did not till ſome little time *after*: But this may ſerve as a Specimen, how *rationally* Men of a *lower* Rank in that Age conducted their *Belief*.

John ix. 38.

§. 17. *Secondly, of that of the Rulers.*

§. 17. And *Nicodemus*'s Conference with Jeſus is as clear a Demonſtration, that the Rulers built their *Perſuaſion* alſo, not but upon *proper* and *weighty* Reaſons.

John iii. 1.

This *Nicodemus* was a *Phariſee*, [a] of a Sect the moſt generally averſe to the Son of God. He was alſo a [b] *Ruler* of the *Jews*, very probably of the *Jewiſh Sanhedrim*.

This *Phariſee* and *Ruler* came to Jeſus by Night, to avoid the Clamours of thoſe of his Sect, and thus accoſted him: [c] *Maſter, we know that it is from God that thou art come a Teacher:* But what Reaſon had the Ruler to entertain a Sentiment like this? *For no Man*, ſays he, *can do the miracles, which thou doſt, except God were with him.*

We have conſider'd your *numerous* and *extraordinary* Miracles, and are aſſur'd that *none* ſuch cou'd poſſibly be wrought by any one but a Perſon aſſiſted by a *Divine* Power.

---

[a] ἐκ τῶν φαρισαίων. [b] ἄρχων τῶν Ἰουδαίων. [c] οἴδαμεν.

§. 18. I can't forbear obſerving from the Word οἴδαμεν, *we know*, that it is very natural to ſuppoſe, that *this* was the Reſult of the Reaſoning of ſeveral of his *Brethren* Rulers as well as *himſelf*, and as well *their* Sentiments as his *own*.

§. 18 Nicodemus *ſpoke as if other Rulers reaſon'd in the ſame Manner as he.*

'Tis obſerv'd indeed by a Learned Commentator, that οἴδαμεν may mean *Nicodemus* only; but tho' it be granted it *may*, yet hear the Reaſon why it does. Why becauſe it is ſaid, John vii. 48. *Have any of the Rulers or Phariſees believed on him?*

See Dr. Whit*by.*

But the Reaſon, why the Parties ſaid this, was, becauſe they *knew not* that *any*, even ſo much as *one* of theſe *had*, becauſe not *one* of 'em was *publickly* and *openly* known ſo to do; and yet at the very *ſame* Time there was preſent amongſt theſe who ſaid this, *Nicodemus*; who was both a *Phariſee*, a *Ruler*, and a *Believer*, and interpos'd in favour of Jeſus againſt the Outcry made againſt him. And if there was *one* believing *Phariſee* and *Ruler* there, tho' they knew it *not*, there might be *more*; and the Word οἴδαμεν import the Sentiment of *ſeveral* of the *Jewiſh* Rulers concerning Jeſus's Miracles, as well as *Nicodemus*'s.

John vii. 48, 50, 51.

This however ſhews, that the *Belief* of thoſe who amongſt the *Jews* were Rulers, of Jeſus being a Perſon coming from God, was form'd upon their having *firſt* conſider'd his *Miracles*, and concluded from the *Nature* of them, from their *Truth*, and *Greatneſs*, and *Multitude*, that the Perſon working

king them cou'd not do it, but by a *Divine* Aſſiſtance.

What then was the Faith, of theſe *Kinſmen* of our Lord's? of theſe *Diſciples* or *Apoſtles?* of theſe *Rulers?* of theſe *Prieſts?* and of the *Vulgar Sort*, the Reſult of too much Credulity? It has appear'd to a Demonſtration, that the Faith of *every* of theſe was *obtruded* upon them by pure *dint* of *Evidence*; it was a Faith *ſlow* and *gradual*, and not form'd till it had a *Rational* Conviction.

But why labour we to make all this *clear* to a *Demonſtration?* If we ſucceed in the Attempt, it is all to *no* purpoſe: Any *Frantic* Writer will in half a Sheet of Paper penn'd in favour of *Infidelity*, (ting'd as the Youth of the Nation at preſent is with Inclinations to it) defeat it *all*, and make them ſwallow the *crudeſt* Propoſitions, the moſt *romantic* Tales, and renounce the *very* Principles without which all *Natural* Religion muſt ſink.

§. 19. *The Infidel follow'd to his ſeveral Retreats.*

§. 19. May the Reader ſpare me his Attention yet a little, whilſt I follow the preſent *Advocates* for Infidelity to *every* Retreat of theirs; and he cannot but be fill'd with extreme *Amazement*, that whilſt pretending to great Strength of *Reaſon*, and to an Exactneſs in bringing every thing faithfully to the Touchſtone of it, they are found to offer the greateſt *Violence* to all its Principles.

§. 20. *The Extravagancy of denying Chriſt's Miracles.*

§. 20. They will firſt deny our Saviour to have wrought any *Miracles*; and hear what in the neceſſary Conſequence of ſo doing they muſt then aver.

And

And this is; that they *Believe* there liv'd once in *Judæa* ſuch an unfortunate *odd* Race of Men, as *no* Hiſtory ever mention'd; Men that in defiance of all their Endeavours to uſe their Senſes *right*, were continually *miſtaken*; thought they knew when their *Children* or *Parents*, or moſt *intimate* Acquaintance were *Blind* and *Lame* and *Dumb*, and *Dead*, and when they were recover'd again to their *Sight*, their *Limbs*, their *Speech*, their *Life*, but they could *not*; for from one end of the Country to the other they were all *ſtupified* and *infatuated* to that Degree, for ſome Years, that they brought their Kinsfolk and Acquaintance to one called Jeſus for *Cure*, under a Notion that they had loſt their *Limbs*, *Sight*, *Speech*, and *Life*; whilſt at the ſame Time all of theſe were *whole*, cou'd *See*, could *Talk*, and gave all the Demonſtrations of *Life*, that any Man now alive could give.

Or at leaſt, if the People of *Judæa knew* their Kinsfolk to be *Blind*, to be *Lame*, to be *Dumb* or *Dead*, when they brought them to Jeſus, the People bringing them were inſtantly *metamorphos'd* with reſpect to their *Underſtanding* and *Senſes*; that they thought their Relations return'd *cur'd* of their ſeveral Complaints; that they cou'd *ſee*, could *ſpeak*, could *walk*, could do all the Offices of a *living* Perſon, when yet in truth they were as *Lame*, as *Dumb*, or *Blind*, or *Dead*, as when they brought them.

This being what every Man muſt ſay in Conſequence, that denies the *Miracles* of Jeſus, it is a ſaying ſomewhat of the People of *Judæa*, ſo *extravagant*, that the Man muſt be diſpos'd to

ſwallow as true every *Romantic* Tale, that can digeſt it.

But the Infidel finding *this* to be *too too* much to attempt to make Men believe, when averr'd in ſo many Words, he retreats from *this* Fortreſs, when a little preſs'd, as too weak to be maintain'd, and runs to *another* as little able to defend him.

§. 21. *The Pretext of the Fallacy of the Senſes, conſider'd and expos'd.*

§. 21. No, ſays he, I don't ſay any thing, that the People of *Judea*, when Jeſus appear'd, were under ſuch *Infatuations* and *Deluſions* for ſome Years, as *no* People were ever known to have been before or ſince; for then I muſt ſay, that every of theſe People was an Inſtance of a Miracle wrought; but I only ſay, the Senſes are very liable to be *miſtaken*, and one may therefore be allow'd to *diſtruſt* them.

Let us examine now, what there is in *this* Subterfuge? Here's a *Defect* pretended in the *Senſes*. We ask then, Are the Senſes ſo defective, that they *never* afford any ground for *Certainty*? If they ſay they are *not* ſo Defective, they ſay not enough to controul the Belief of *Miracles*. If they ſay they *are*, they are falſe to thoſe *ſame* Principles whereon themſelves muſt erect the Edifice of all *Natural* Religion. Then they can't be certain there is a *Sun* in the Firmament, upon their Senſes Report that there is: They can't, in ſhort, be *certain* of *any* Thing; and can't, therefore, as has been largely ſaid, make any certain Concluſions of God's *Being*, his *Power* or *Wiſdom*, from his Handy-works; becauſe they are not abſolutely certain of the very *Exiſtence* of the *Creatures*

tures themſelves, from whoſe *Greatneſs*, and *Beauty*, and *Uſefulneſs*, all theſe Concluſions are to be drawn.

Again, to aver the Senſes are *never* any Ground of *Certainty*, contradicts the daily Experience of all Mankind. Mayn't a Man be allow'd to be certain that his Horſe is *near* him; no, not when he *ſees* himſelf upon his Back, *feels* him under him, *hears* him Snort, *perceives* him Stumble, is *ſhook* by his Motion, drinking in his Aſſurance at almoſt every Senſe he has?

Finding the Senſes to be capable of affording us ſome *Certainty*, they are eaſily driven from aſſerting the contrary, as an Aſſertion of which they know they ſhall be aſham'd: Where then is their next Recourſe to *ſhelter* 'em in their Infidelity?

§. 22. O, they may ſay, the *Jews* were *ſtupid* and *careleſs*, the Diſciples *credulous* and *ignorant*, his Relations *bigotted*, and *all* ſuſceptible eaſily of *Falſhood*, and entertaining *counterfeit* Miracles for *true*.

§. 22. *The Pretext of the Negligence and Credulity of thoſe in the Goſpel Age, conſider'd and expos'd.*

This indeed is eaſily ſaid, but it is moſt wickedly *falſe*; and all of theſe the very *reverſe* of what they are repreſented.

For what were the *Signs* of the *Jews* being *careleſs* and *ſtupid*, during the Seaſon of *Miracles* being wrought? The Signs of a general *Careleſneſs* at that Time, *were* theſe that follow.

The *Chief Prieſts*, the *Scribes*, the *Phariſees*, the *Sadducees*, the *Herodians*, every *Sect* and *Denomination* ſeverally *watch'd* him; they ſet *Spies* upon him, when they were not upon the Watch *them-*

themſelves; they were ſome or other of 'em *perpetually* about him to Enſnare him.

With Reference to their *Stupidity* and *Negligence*; they *call'd* the Parents of a Party brought to his Sight from being born Blind, they make 'em *look* upon the Man pretended to be their *Son*; they ask 'em if they *knew* him; if they cou'd *challenge* his *Face*; were *ſure* of his being their *Child*; and if they cou'd *aver* him to have been *born* Blind; ſuppoſing it *poſſible* for thoſe who were his *Neighbours* only, to have been *miſtaken* in him.

And then for the Reaſons of the Diſciples being *credulous* and *ignorant*, their Maſter had told 'em in ſo many Words, that after *the being crucify'd, he wou'd riſe again.* Many of his conſtant Followers, that went to the Sepulchre to anoint the Corps, found it *not* there; and in their Return *ſaw Jeſus alive*, *held* him by the *Feet*, *heard* him *ſpeak*, receiv'd a *Meſſage* from him to deliver to the Diſciples; which they did accordingly *deliver*, and declar'd their having *ſeen* him. *Mary Magdalen*, who had ſeparately *ſeen* him, *declar'd* the *ſame*; and afterwards the *two* Men journeying to *Emmaus*; but as an Argument of the *culpable Credulity* of the Diſciples, they believ'd *none* of all theſe ſeveral *Eye-witneſſes* of his being riſen, gave *no* Credit to his Reſurrection, till they had *ſeen* him *themſelves*; and *one* of 'em did not *believe* the *whole* College of Apoſtles, *ſuſpending* his *Belief*, till he had with his *Fingers* ſearch'd the Wounds which the Nails and Spear had made.

And

And for his *Relations* being *bigotted* to him, they have this Reaſon to be aſſured of it, becauſe they believed on him *later* than ſeveral others.

Such are the Reaſons the Infidel muſt give of its being an *incurious*, a *ſtupid* and *credulous* Age, when *Jeſus* wrought his *Miracles*; which are the only Reaſons we cou'd poſſibly demand, to eſtabliſh the Credit of any People, as *wakeful*, *vigilant* and *active* Searchers into the Truth of Things, as *wary* and *ſhy* in believing, and *infinitely* jealous of being impos'd upon.

So that to ſink the Credit of that Age, they muſt change the *Nature* of Things, and alter the preſent *Standards*, whereby we judge of Mens Characters: And Men muſt hereafter be pronounc'd *Credulous*, becauſe they are *ſlow* of Belief; and *Incredulous* whenever they are *ſwift* in aſſenting; which are each of 'em the very *formal* Reaſons why they are not ſo.

It having now been found, that the People of *Judea* who believ'd *Jeſus* to have wrought Miracles, were no *Ideots*, no *voracious* Swallowers of *Romantick* Tales, and a People too *wary* and *prying* to have *counterfeit* Miracles palm'd upon 'em for *true* ones, where will the Infidel fly next?

§. 23. Nothing is left him, but to impute theſe Miracles to ſome *wicked* Spirit; which is a Tenet big with *Blaſphemy* and *Folly* both.

§. 23. *Chriſt's Miracles aſcrib'd to a wicked Spirit, conſider'd and expos'd.*

With *Blaſphemy* againſt the one *God*, becauſe it ſuppoſes him to have abandon'd ſo conſiderable a Part of his Creation, as all the *Rational* Intelligences dwelling in Houſes of *Fleſh* upon this Globe of *Earth*, to the malevolent Humours of

perni-

pernicious *Spirits*, to the total aboliſhing all Belief of his *Providence*.

It is a Tenet big with *Folly*, becauſe it ſuppoſes theſe *wicked* Spirits fooliſhly combin'd to ſupport a *Man*, that was totally attach'd to the One *true* God, in Oppoſition to *themſelves*, and was always acting vigorouſly againſt their *Worſhip* and *Intereſt*. It ſuppoſes 'em to encourage one that was himſelf a great Example of *Sincerity* and *Truth*; a ſtrenuous Declaimant againſt all *Hypocriſy* and *Falſhood*, *Pride* and *Envy*, and *every* miſchievous Quality, which theſe malevolent Spirits his reputed Maſters delight in.

This compounds into the Ideas of that grand Apoſtate Spirit, and all his Clan, a *Stupidity* beyond what the *weakeſt* of mortal Men cou'd be guilty of; makes him *falſe* to the moſt apparent *Intereſt* of his *own* Kingdom, to have no *Cunning* to entitle him to the Character of the old *Serpent*, nor any *Falſhood* in his Nature, to juſtify Men in ſtiling him the Father of *Lies*.

§. 24. The ſuppoſing God gave him Miracles to ſupport him in falſe Pretenſions to the Character of the Meſſiah, expoſed.

§. 24. Or elſe, if they reject *this blaſphemous* and *fooliſh* Tenet, and allow *Jeſus* to have wrought his Miracles by a Power derived from the *one* true God, and at the ſame Time believe this *Jeſus* to have *Perſonated* a Meſſiah prophecy'd of, when he was *not* that Meſſiah, and when *no* ſuch Perſon was ever *dreamt* of or *foretold*: This is a Propoſition as *Blaſphemous* and *Fooliſh* as the other.

Blaſphemous, becauſe it makes the God of *Truth*, that gave him his Credentials, a Party to a *Cheat*:

Fooliſh,

Fooliſh, becauſe it makes the ſame God egregiouſly *Inconſiſtent*; ſending a Meſſenger to preach up with his Lips that *Sincerity*, and *Truth*, and *Openneſs*, and *undiſguized* Plainneſs, which he yet warranted him to Diſcountenance by his own *Example*.

§. 25. *The Extravagance of the Infidel's Belief.*

§. 25. Let the Infidels no longer object it to us, that we require the Belief of Things *Myſterious*; we have no Propoſitions for Men to aſſent to, which thus palpably affront the *common Senſe* and *Reaſon* of Mankind, as the *hard* ones which they require their Devotees to away with.

To believe that in the Years of Chriſt 30. 1, 2, 3. there was a certain Country call'd *Judea*, where the Inhabitants for all that Space of Time, cou'd not tell when their own Children were *Blind*, and when *not*; when their *Relations* were *dead*, nor when *alive*; when they were *lame*, and when *not*; and in ſhort, con'd neither *ſee* nor *hear*, nor *diſcern* by their *Touch*, any manner of Thing whatſoever with Certainty; and yet to diſbelieve any ſuch Thing as *Miracles*, though all this were impoſſible, without *endleſs* Accumulations of 'em:

Or, to believe the God of *Truth* gave a Perſon *Miracles* to avouch him his Meſſenger, though a *Cheat*.

Or to believe that the *Devil*, the Father of *Lies*, gave him his Miracles to preach up *Sincerity* and *Truth*.

Or to ſay the Age he liv'd in was *negligent* and *incurious*, becauſe they continually *watch'd* him, and had *Spies* to obſerve him; that his *Diſciples* were *credulous*, becauſe they ſuſpended their *Belief*

lief of his Reſurrection, in Defiance of *ſuch* Evidence for the Proof of *Facts*, as are admitted of Sufficiency in the Caſes of *Life* and *Death*, in every wiſely conſtituted State under the Arch of *Heaven*.

Some or other of theſe are the *Articles* of their *Creed*, which the Proſelytes to *Infidelity* muſt ſubſcribe to; theſe hard Sayings not to be digeſted by *any* Man's Reaſon, are not difficult at all to *theirs*.

But what is monſtrous above all, and an indelible Reproach to the *Underſtanding* of the young Gentry in *theſe* Times, who are ſower'd with the Leven of *Infidelity*, is, that they are ſtill cajoled by their Leaders into a firm Perſuaſion, that they think the moſt *reaſonably* and *conſiſtently* of all Men whatſoever. That all Generations were *credulous* and *incurious*, 'till they taught 'em to *enquire* and *examine*; that they ſcorn to let their Aſſent yield to *Propoſitions* altogether *unreaſonable*, as their Forefathers have done.

§. 26. *The Infidels Inconſiſtencies.*

§. 26. And yet all this while they are the moſt *unreaſonable* and *inconſiſtent* People upon Earth; abhorring *Myſteries*, and at the ſame time devouring *Contradictions*; crying out againſt *Creeds*, and yet ſubmitting to the Belief of *Propoſitions* much more *aſtoniſhing* than any thoſe *Creeds* contain; pretending to ſpeak *reverently* of God, and yet *vilifying* in plain Conſequence, all his *Attributes* and *Perfections*; crying up *Natural* Religion, and yet ſapping the Foundation of it in the very Arguments they uſe againſt *Reveal'd*; denying the *Miracles* we believe, and ſuppoſing *more* and *greater* to have been wrought, in Conſe-

quence

quence of that *Denial:* Giving out that they examine and enquire into *all* Things, but ſearch to the bottom of *nothing*. And whilſt they ſcorn to aſſent to ſuch Tenets as their *Forefathers*, it is plain to a Demonſtration, that the *Forefathers* they ſo contemn, were never ſaddled with the Belief of thoſe *Romantick* Doctrines which they are obliged to bear with: And cou'd they now riſe out of their Graves, wou'd wonder to ſee their Off-ſpring ſo infatuated, as to apprehend their Underſtanding at full *Liberty* under all theſe viſible *Shackles*; which can be owing to nothing but a wretched want of *Care* to ſearch into the *bottom* of Things, as they are made to believe they *do*, but do *not*.

Who can, without the juſteſt *Indignation* and *Concern*, ſee many of the Flower of his Country, divers of the Youth of good *Deſcent*, and liberal *Education*, benighted by a Darkneſs ſuperinduc'd upon their Minds, through the *Miſts* rais'd about 'em, by the *ſophiſtical* Reaſoning of artful Men, and following after every *ignis fatuus*, every *falſe Light*, under an Apprehenſion of finding 'em *faithful* and *ingenuous* Guides?

And do thoſe Guides find any *ſolid* Ground, whereon to *fix* the ſoles of the Feet of ſuch as they have ſet a wandring? Do they give 'em a Syſtem of more *ſtable* and *rational* Principles, which will be productive of a better *Practice*, than thoſe which *Chriſtianity* and the *Light* of *Reaſon*, have already furniſh'd out?

No; for all the Attempts of theſe are not to *fix*, but *unſettle* 'em; ſtriving by a crafty playing the Opponents, to *demoliſh* every Tenet of Religion, without ſo much as pretending to *advance*

any other more univerſally *pleaſing* and *ſatisfactory* in their Stead.

Therefore in the room of taking the main Articles of our Religion to be allow'd for *true*, and preſſing Men to ſubmit to all its amiable *Precepts*, upon a Conceſſion that they are: We are every now and then forc'd to lay anew the *Foundation* of our *Faith*; becauſe ever and anon there is ſtarting up a ſet of *raw inadvertent* Men, that having not allow'd themſelves Time to conſider the *Foundations* of Chriſtianity, nor yet to read the Scriptures, ſo as to *digeſt* 'em, are perplex'd with the Difficulties ſtarted by every *knaviſh* and *ſophiſtical* Reaſoner, and unſettled in their Belief, though their own *Judgments* might ſerve to keep 'em ſteady, were they duly to weigh the Arguments.

§. 27. Real Truths, and Hiſtorical Facts, not changeable by Time.

§. 27. *Sound* Reaſon, and all the plain *Maxims* of it, are not ſubject to any *Variableneſs*, or *Shadow of Change*; and if a Conviction was a *Rational* Conviction *Yeſterday*, it is ſo to *Day*, and will be ſo *for ever*.

The *Prieſts* that became afterwards obedient to the Faith, though doubting at *firſt*, the *Apoſtles* of *Jeſus*, and his own *Relations*, have been prov'd to have been all of 'em the *Proſelytes* of ſuch *Conviction*; bid *adieu* to the Precepts of *one* Divine Lawgiver *Moſes*, as obligatory, for no other Reaſon, but becauſe *another* appear'd to have full *Powers* and *Commiſſion* from God to *cancel* thoſe Obligations, and to give 'em *other* Laws in their Room.

Nothing ſhort of the moſt *forcible* Demonſtration, from *Miracles*, from *Prophecy*, from the pure *Life*, and equitable *Precepts* of the *Second* Lawgiver,

giver, cou'd have wrought upon 'em thus to do.

Now if this Religion preſs'd its way to their Acceptance, and perfectly *controul'd* their *Aſſent* to it, by the irreſiſtible *Force* of *Reaſon* and *Evidence*, whence comes it, that *this* which was a *rational* Religion Seventeen Hundred Years ago, ſhould ceaſe to be a *reaſonable* one now? Does Time make that ceaſe to be Reaſon, which once was ſo?

It is a Rule of Equity, which every Man's Mind witneſſes to as a juſt one, that *we ſhou'd do to others as we wou'd have others do to us:* Will length of Time ever make the Reaſonableneſs of this ceaſe, or Millions of Years evacuate its Obligation?

But as if thoſe *Teſtimonies* in Behalf of Chriſtianity which were *once reaſonable*, and carry'd their Conviction to the extorting the Aſſent of moſt *reaſonable* and *wary* Men, have loſt all their Reaſonableneſs by Duration of *Time*, and *Truth* was turn'd into *Falſhood* by *length* of *Years*, we are perpetually bringing it to the Anvil of *Reaſon* to faſhion it *anew*, though it was form'd on no other Anvil than that at firſt.

Many have been the Extravagances of Thinking which this Age has produc'd; and it wou'd therefore be the leſs to be wonder'd at, if ſome in it ſhou'd come to be perſuaded of this amongſt the reſt, *viz.* that *Hiſtorical Facts change their Truth by Time:* And though *now* it be true, that *Julius Cæſar* was murther'd in the *Senate-Houſe*, and *Pompey* on the *Coaſt* of *Egypt*, it may poſſibly be falſe a *Thouſand* Years hence; and the former may be found to have dy'd in the Emperor of

China's *Palace*, and the latter on the Coaſt of *America*; Places not known to, and perhaps never heard of by either of 'em.

Jeſus's *recovering* divers to *Life*, and working *miraculous Cures*, were as truly *Hiſtorical Facts*, as was the *Murther* of theſe two Generals, capable alike of an Hiſtorian's *Knowledge* and *Certainty*, and have been ſhewn to have been *once true*. If they can therefore become *falſe* by *Time*, then may every *Hiſtorical Fact* recorded: *Time* will be found to do that which God himſelf *cannot*, that is, to make a Fact *not* to *have been* at all, which *once was*.

But evil-minded Men will ever make this Religion a matter of *Debate*; becauſe while any Controverſy relating to the *Truth* of Chriſtianity is ſtill depending, they judge their Obligations of ſubmitting to it as a *Rule* of *Practice*, to be fairly ſuſpended.

§. 28. *Chriſtianity will appear to have all the Conviction which Senſe and Reaſon can give it.*

§. 28. Let 'em however weary themſelves never ſo long in finding Flaws, it will ſtill appear to have all the Evidence which the Conviction of *Senſe* and *Reaſon* can give it.

If we the Inhabitants of *Great Britain* can now, in the Years 1727-8-9, be ever *certain* of any Thing, upon the Reports of our *Senſes*, when we uſe 'em with the *utmoſt Warineſs* and *Circumſpection*; the Dwellers in the *Holy-Land* in the Years 30. 1, 2, 3. uſing their Senſes *thus*, cou'd be *certain* alſo. And as ſurely as the *Senſes* Reports can be Grounds of *Certainty*, ſo ſure it is that Miracles were then wrought by a Perſon call'd *Jeſus*.

And if *Reaſon* can judge at all of the *Equity* of any *Precepts*, whether they be *juſt* and *righteous* Laws, they *all* appear to be ſuch which this Worker of *Miracles* enjoin'd. And it is impoſſible but it muſt have been ſome *good* Being which enabled him to work 'em, becauſe a *wicked* Spirit wou'd never have ſent him on an Errand for the Propagation of exact *Juſtice* and *Purity*; nor yet for the crying up the Worſhip of the *one* God, the *true* Supreme Being, in Oppoſition to *it ſelf*.

It muſt needs then have been ſome *good* Spirit that wou'd ſend him to exhort Men to live conſonantly to *all* the Rules of *Juſtice*, *all* thoſe Laws which are engraven upon the fleſhly Tables of the *Heart*, and which the Light of every Man's Mind witneſſes to, as moſt highly *reaſonable*.

And inaſmuch as *Jeſus* ſaid it was the *one* God who ſent him, who enabled him to do *thoſe* Works, and preach *that* Doctrine, we have all the Reaſon in the World to believe it; becauſe that *one* God was the only *inviſible* Being to whom he was attach'd, whoſe *Honour* he ſought to promote, and who was concern'd to furniſh him with proper *Credentials* to *ſupport* him.

This if ſearch'd with never ſo much *Care*, and brought never ſo often to the *Touchſtone*, will be found a Doctrine moſt *Rational*: And we cannot *disbelieve* it, but we muſt believe inſtead thereof, ſomething that is moſt palpably *Falſe* and *Romantick*, *Blaſphemous* and *Unreaſonable*; ſomewhat which will not only deſtroy all the Grounds of *Chriſtianity*, but of *all* Religion whatſoever.

§. 29. *The Folly of oppoſing Chriſtianity becauſe Eſtabliſh'd by Law, expos'd.*

§. 29. There is daily growing in the Minds of Men a *Luxury* of Fancy, and Extravagance of Thinking, which learns them like the *Iſraelites* to nauſeate the Manna, tho' certainly of an *Heavenly* Extract. Hence it is that they are weary of Doctrines they *have*, and hanker after ſomewhat they *have not*.

This makes them complain of Chriſtianity itſelf, becauſe it is their *Native* and *Country* Religion, and ſeems *obtruded* upon them by the Eſtabliſhment of *Laws*,

But is Chriſtianity therefore *unreaſonable* becauſe it is *eſtabliſh'd*, and wou'd it be *more* reaſonable if it were *not*? If it be ſo, then was it however a *reaſonable* Syſtem of Rules for *Faith* and *Practice* at *firſt*, becauſe it had not the *Civil Power* on its ſide; and even *ſtill* is it ſuch a *reaſonable* one in *Turkey*, *China*, and *Morocco*, where the *Government* is oppoſite to it.

What then, is it a *reaſonable* Religion in one Continent, and does it *ceaſe* to be ſuch when getting into *another*? Was it ſomewhat *unexceptionable*, when in *Fez*; but is it full of *Flaws* when it has paſs'd the Streights and got to *Gibraltar*? Did it deſerve to be *defended* when in *Africa*, but to be *oppoſed* when in *Europe*? This is a *new* and *rare* kind of Reaſoning indeed.

But how came it by its firſt *Eſtabliſhment*? was it the *Sword*, which originally procur'd it? No, nothing but its own intrinſick *worth* and *reaſonableneſs* recommended it. And ſhall we quarrel with it then as an *unreaſonable* Syſtem of Faith, becauſe it was *Eſtabliſh'd* when it was its pure Reaſonableneſs only, which procur'd it that Eſtabliſhment?

ment? That therefore which is weakly enough objected as matter of Exception to it, is indeed no other than a juſt *Preſumption* in its favour, and a real *Plea* in its behalf.

§. 30. If it be thought, we have follow'd theſe *inconſiſtent* Reaſoners far *enough*, and perhaps *too* far; be it remember'd, that none can be an unconcern'd Spectator, when he ſees a Spirit of *Atheiſm* about to infeſt his Country, from whence *all* imaginable Evils are to be apprehended; it being a Peſtilential Boil, which will ſmite with Conſumption all *Godlineſs* and *Honeſty* too, upon whomſoever it ſhall happen to ſeize. The Incenſe of *Prayer* and *Praiſe* will of courſe ceaſe to be offer'd to the *Father*, which is already withheld from the only *Son* of his Love. And when the *Father* ſhall be no more dreaded as an *Avenger to execute Wrath upon him that does Evil*, than is the *Son* as the *Lion of the Tribe of Judah*, the only feeble Reſtraints upon the wickedly diſpos'd, will be the Magiſtrates *Sword*, and this can reſtrain from no Wickedneſs, which Men can act with *Secreſy* or *Impunity*.

§. 30. The Miſchiefs to be apprehended to the Publick from the Progreſs Infidelity is making.

If the Offender is too *big* for the Magiſtrate to dare to execute Juſtice upon, or *cunning* enough to elude his Notice, every ſuch will eſcape unpuniſh'd, and every ſuch will dare to be *unjuſt* as far as his being ſo can contribute to his *Pleaſure* or to his *Profit*.

Or elſe, if the People ſhall be too reſolutely fix'd in the *Belief* of *God* and his *beloved Son* to be moved from the *Duty* they owe to *either*; If in deteſtation of the ſudden Progreſs *Infidelity*

is making, they by a ſtrong *Revulſion* ſhould be carried into the *Oppoſite* Extreme, and reconciled to a *Superſtitious* Worſhip, which rapid Motion from one Extreme to its oppoſite, our own Hiſtory will tell to be no uncommon *turn* for a People to take, then is a Relapſe to *Popery* to be apprehended.

For ſeeing Men to have us'd their *Reaſon* in matters of *Religion* to a moſt *amazing extravagance*, they may come to diſcard *all reaſoning* upon it. *Religion* will then ceaſe to be a *Rational* Service as now it is, and become, what it every where is under the prevalence of *Popery*, all over *Bigotry* and *Superſtition*.

Theſe being *both* of them *Evils* very great, if any thing here advanc'd ſhould contribute to the preventing them, to the *Publick* be the *Benefit*, and to *God* the *Glory*.

THE END.